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COULTER, CARLTON J.

TRAILS TO TRAILS

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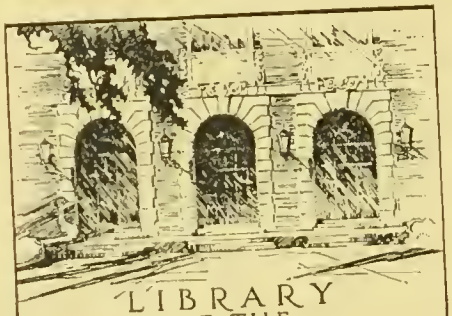

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Illinois Historical Survey

TRAILS to RAILS

By
CARLTON J. CORLISS

A Story of Transportation
Progress in Illinois

Foreword

WITHIN two life-spans Illinois has been transformed from an untamed wilderness into a great agricultural and industrial commonwealth, rivaling in many respects some of the foremost nations of the world. Most of this development has taken place within the memory of persons now living.

The secret of Illinois' remarkable progress is told in one word—transportation. Transportation was the key that unlocked the great natural resources of Illinois. It opened the door of opportunity to the farmer, the miner, the manufacturer and the merchant. Without good transportation Illinois' agricultural, industrial and commercial development could not have taken place.

The strategic position of Illinois as the "keystone" of the American railway system makes it the most accessible state in the Union. Its principal city, Chicago, has long been the world's greatest railway center. Radiating from this mid-western metropolis are thirty-odd railway lines, reaching out into every part of our great country and into Canada, and providing direct connections at the seaports with steamship lines to and from every part of the civilized world. East St. Louis, Peoria, Rockford, Springfield, Decatur, Joliet, Bloomington, Centralia, Galesburg and other cities of Illinois are also important transportation centers. Through these busy gateways and over these arteries of steel flows a commerce of far greater magnitude than was carried on in the entire country before railroads were introduced.

In the following pages we shall trace briefly the development of transportation in Illinois from the earliest times to the present day, and we shall consider the part which railway transportation has played in the making of this prairie state.

C. J. C.

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ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST EXPRESS TRAIN

From a drawing by Robert E. Lee, by courtesy of Railway Express Agency, Inc.

TRAILS TO RAILS

CHAPTER I

Native Trails

WHEN the French explorers and missionaries visited the Illinois country in the latter part of the Seventeenth Century, they were impressed by the vastness of the prairies, the beauty of the forests and the abundance of animal life. Especially were they impressed by the strange "wild cattle" which traveled in great herds, sometimes in single file, sometimes plunging in wild stampede.

These "wild cattle" were the American buffaloes—the first "trail blazers" in the western country. In their annual migrations from the far western plains to the salt licks of Kentucky and the rich feeding grounds of the Allegheny slopes, they followed beaten trails which broadened into wide roads on high ground and narrowed to slender paths in the bottomlands.

THE FIRST TRAIL-BLAZERS—Buffalo trails became the red man's paths and the white man's roads. From *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, January, 1869, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

From time immemorial these buffalo paths were used by the Illinois Indians in their overland travels to and from the Mississippi, Wabash and Ohio rivers. Later they became the pathways of the hunter, the trapper and the fur trader. Some of them developed into important routes of pioneer travel.

Daniel Boone and other pathfinders in the region west of the Alleghenies followed these great game trails for long distances through the wilderness. The old "Saint Louis Trace," believed to be the first overland route used by the Americans to reach the Illinois country, was originally a buffalo trail, worn deep by the hoofbeats of innumerable herds. This historic trail, also called the "Vincennes Trail" in olden days, extended from the Falls of the Ohio, opposite the present city of Louisville, Ky., to a crossing of the Wabash River at or near Vincennes and thence westward across Illinois along a route now closely paralleled by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to St. Louis.

The vicinity of old Fort Massac, where the city of Metropolis now stands, was the Ohio River terminus of several buffalo paths, which extended northward and westward through Johnson and Pope counties.

The Indians also used many trails of their own making in their travels to and from their numerous villages and water routes within and beyond the present borders of Illinois. The red men usually located their villages on or near the banks of rivers or streams and used these natural water courses extensively in traveling from place to place. The light bark canoe, extensively used by the Wisconsin and Michigan Indians, was a luxury among the Illinois tribes, as the birch tree from which the bark was obtained did not grow in Illinois. A more common craft in Illinois was the hollow log canoe, or "dugout," heavier and slower than the bark canoe.

Just as the white men have centers, like Chicago, East St. Louis and Peoria, from which railroads and highways radiate, so the Indians had their radial points, or transportation centers. One such center was in the vicinity of Metropolis, on the Ohio River; another was near the mouth of the Kaskaskia River; another was near the site of Danville, on the Big Vermillion River, where the important

Piankishaw Indian village was located. Similar focal centers of Indian travel were at the mouth of the Chicago River, at Black Hawk's village on the Rock River, at the confluence of the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers and at the northwest corner of the state in the vicinity of Galena.

Some native trails were well-beaten footpaths; others, but infrequently used, were so faint that even the most experienced hunter did not venture forth upon them without the aid of an Indian guide.

Of all the Indian trails in Illinois, the one most frequently used by the early explorers and fur traders was the "Portage Path," bridging the gap between the headwaters of the Chicago and Illinois rivers. The Chicago portage varied in length, depending upon the stages and conditions of the rivers. In periods of heavy rain and swollen streams, the navigable waters of the two systems almost joined, while in dry seasons a land journey of from fifty to one hundred miles was sometimes necessary.

Linking as it did the two most extensive systems of natural waterways on the North American Continent—the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River systems—the importance of the Chicago portage as a trade and travel route was second to no other man-made thoroughfare in the days of exploration, conquest and early settlement in this region.

The story of this historic old trail is one of intense romantic interest. Doubtless it was the warpath of the savage long before the coming of the Europeans. It bore the first white men ever to set foot upon Western soil. Along this narrow way plodded Father Marquette, Joliet, La Salle, the "Columbus of the West," and his faithful Tonti, Father Hennepin, St. Cosme and other historic figures upon their missions of discovery and exploration. It was the path of the sad remnant of La Salle's expedition en route to Quebec with news of their intrepid leader's tragic death. It was the route of the French pioneers—the first settlers of Kaskaskia, Cahokia and St. Louis. For a century or more it was a favorite route of priest, trader and trapper.

Another native path of unusual interest was the "Great Sauk Trail," which extended from the Indian villages near the present site of Rock Island eastward through the Rock and Fox River valleys, around the southern shore of Lake Michigan toward Malden, in Canada, where the Sauk and Fox tribes went each year to receive their annuities from the British Government. This famous old trail was used extensively by white men in the romantic days of the fur trade.

THE EXPLORERS—Rivers were the main pathways of explorer, priest and trader in their efforts to plant the seeds of civilization in this far western country. From *The Story of Chicago*, by Joseph Kirkland.

Native paths also linked old Kaskaskia with Fort Massac and the Rock River country. The Potawatomies, occupying northeastern Illinois, were connected with the Winnebagoes in the Rock River country by the "Kiswaukee Trail," which extended from the Marpocs Indian village on the Kankakee River to the vicinity of Rockford. A similar overland trail extended from the Marpocs village toward the great Piankishaw Indian village near where the city of Danville now stands.

The "Sauk and Kickapoo Trail" linked the Danville country with the Great Kickapoo Village in the Livingston County region. The old "Des Moines Trail," known to white men as early as 1680, led from the mouth of Bureau Creek, on the Illinois River, southwestwardly to the banks of the Mississippi River in Hancock County.

Green Bay Road, leading from Chicago northward through Evanston, Wilmette and Lake Forest, began as the "Green Bay Trail" of the Indians and was one of the principal routes of pioneer travel to and from eastern Wisconsin.

Some time after Kaskaskia and Detroit were founded by the French, in 1700 and 1701, respectively, an overland trail connecting the two and known as the "Kaskaskia and Detroit Trail," was blazed across the state in a northeasterly direction through the present counties of Washington, Marion, Fayette, Effingham, Cumberland, Coles and Edgar to the Indian villages near Danville and thence to Detroit.

At the salt springs, west of Danville, the trace formed a junction with an ancient Indian trail leading southward to Vincennes—thus linking the three foremost centers of French influence in the Great Lakes and upper Mississippi Valley regions—Detroit, Kaskaskia and Vincennes.

In those far-off days, however, travel and trade in Illinois were confined principally to the Illinois, Mississippi, Wabash, Kankakee and other water routes. French traders and trappers employed the bateau and the pirogue chiefly in transporting their furs and merchandise. These were open boats, considerably larger than the skiff or Indian canoe, and were each capable of carrying two or three tons' burden.

INDIANS ON THE MOVE—The travois was probably the first "vehicle" in the Mississippi Valley. From *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, February, 1868, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

Aside from the French settlements at Kaskaskia, Cahokia and Prairie du Rocher, near the Mississippi River in southern Illinois, and a few small fur depots in northern Illinois, the Illinois country remained, during the period of French and British occupation, an unbroken and largely unexplored wilderness in which the red men held undisputed dominion.

Until the early years of the Nineteenth Century outbound commerce in the Illinois country consisted almost exclusively of furs purchased from the Indians at river trading posts and shipped northward, principally by way of the Chicago and Wisconsin rivers, to the great fur depot at Mackinac Island in Lake Huron, and thence to Montreal by way of the Ottawa River portage.

This commerce was extensive. Trading posts on the Illinois River alone forwarded to Mackinac in one year 13,500 raccoon and muskrat skins, 10,000 deer skins, 500 cat and fox skins, 400 otter skins and 300 pounds of beaver skins. Barter goods shipped from Mackinac to the Illinois country for use in purchasing furs from the Indians consisted principally of cloth, guns, ammunition, flints, liquors, beads, needles, thread, mirrors, axes, hatchets, kettles, knives, tobacco and toys.

To the several assembling and distributing points for this trade came the Indians by canoe, on foot, on ponies, or with pony- or dog-drawn travois, to exchange furs for articles or trinkets that pleased their fancy.

The native trails leading to these trading posts eventually became the routes for some of the principal highways in Illinois.

CHAPTER II

Pioneer Routes and Modes of Travel

IN 1800 the Northwest Territory was divided into two parts—one embraced the territory which later became Ohio and the eastern half of Michigan; the other, known as Indiana Territory, embraced the region now forming Indiana, western Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and that part of Minnesota lying east of the Mississippi River.

The entire Illinois country embraced fewer than 2,500 souls, exclusive of Indians. These were mostly French at Kaskaskia and Cahokia. Included in the number were a group of Virginians, who in 1782 had established New Design, the first important American settlement in the Illinois country, about twenty-five miles northwest of Kaskaskia.

Illinois was then on the far western frontier, bordering on the Spanish territory of Louisiana. A perilous journey of several weeks through unbroken wilderness, across mountains and unbridged streams and against the strong currents of the rivers lay between these courageous pioneers and the homes and loved ones they had left behind. Their feeling of isolation in this new country was expressed in a letter which Governor St. Clair wrote to his friend Alexander Hamilton:

"In compassion to a poor devil banished to another planet," he wrote, "tell me what is doing in yours, if you can snatch a moment from the weighty cares of your office."

ANCIENT KASKASKIA—A capital and commercial center before Chicago and Springfield were founded, Kaskaskia, in Randolph County, dating from 1700, is believed to be the oldest permanent settlement in the Mississippi Valley. Courtesy, Chicago Historical Society.

In that early period there were two well-established routes of travel from the States to the Illinois country. One was the Wilderness Road, through Cumberland Gap, and thence through Crab Orchard to the Falls of the Ohio, from which point the trip to Illinois was usually made by flatboat or keelboat. The other route was a pack trail through the mountains to Pittsburgh or Wheeling and thence down the Ohio River.

Families too poor to afford the luxury of a keel- or flatboat journey down river followed native overland trails, employing local boatmen to ferry them across the Ohio and other rivers which could not be forded. Reaching Illinois opposite Vincennes, or at Shawneetown or Fort Massac, these early pioneers followed winding native trails on foot or on horseback through the dense forests of southern Illinois to the American settlements on the Mississippi.

Such a journey, beset with many perils and hardships, frequently consumed four or five weeks' time. The savage was still a menace to be reckoned with. Bears still roamed the forests, and the blood-curdling cry of prowling wolves rendered nights a horror to even the most courageous. To avoid the perilous overland journey some of those using river transportation completed the trip to the settlements by water, a difficult undertaking on the Mississippi because of the opposing current of the river.

Mail arrivals at the Illinois settlements were then of rare occurrence. There was no mail service of any description west of Vincennes. Letters passing between the Illinois settlements and the outside world were intrusted to accommodating travelers or to river boatmen. Incoming mails, conveyed in the same manner, were infrequent and irregular in the extreme, and it was not uncommon for letters to be three to six months old on reaching their destination.

"The Boat That Never Returned"—The flatboat was a down-river craft, too cumbersome and unwieldy to be propelled against the swift river currents. This is how many pioneer families came to southern Illinois, bringing household effects, implements, horses, cows, pigs, dogs, chickens, ready to start life anew in a new land. From *The Story of Chicago,* by Joseph Kirkland.

When Fort Dearborn was established at the mouth of the Chicago River in 1803, the nearest postoffice was at Fort Wayne, 150 miles distant, and for several years thereafter the mail was brought in to the fort once a month by foot messenger. This was probably the first regular mail service within the present borders of Illinois.

By 1805 several small American settlements had been established in the bottom lands along the Mississippi River between Kaskaskia and Cahokia, and the need of orderly communication between these isolated outposts and the seat of territorial government led to the establishment in that year of the first mail route in southern Illinois — between Vincennes and Cahokia.

Shawneetown, destined to play an important role in the early development of Illinois, was settled about this time by a group of Southerners engaged in salt-making in the nearby salines, and in 1806 a mail route was established between that settlement and Vincennes. In 1810 government post routes were extended to Kaskaskia, then the leading commercial center in the Illinois country, and to St. Louis, then an important fur depot of about 2,000 inhabitants.

A "post route" in frontier days might be merely a narrow trail or bridle path, marked through the forest by notches cut in the trees and through prairie country by crude signs on poles driven into the ground. The mail courier usually traveled on horseback, with pouches suspended from the saddle and with his faithful musket and hunting knife always within instant reach. Mail arrivals were infrequent and often irregular, especially during winter and spring or in periods of Indian trouble.

One of the famous mail couriers of early days was young Harry Wilton, who later became a United States marshal. During the troublous times of the second war with England, when the Indians were on the rampage and none but the bravest of the brave dared to venture far from the settlements, Wilton, then a mere boy, thrilled the settlers by carrying the mails on a wild French pony through the enemy's country from Shawneetown to Cahokia.

When Illinois was admitted to statehood in 1818 its population had reached 40,000, confined almost entirely to narrow rims along the Mississippi, Wabash and Ohio rivers in the southern part of the state. More than nine-tenths of Illinois was a "howling wilderness over which the savage enjoyed undisputed dominion, outnumbering the whites three to one." Kaskaskia was the state capital.

Aside from the fur trade, the external com-

merce of the state was of small consequence. A few trips were being made each season to New Orleans by flatboats, keelboats or pirogues to exchange peltries, corn, flour, bacon, feathers and other products for tea, coffee, sugar, spices, cloth and other articles of small bulk. Such trips were hazardous in the

THE KEEL-BOAT.

THE KEELBOAT—In the early days this was a popular river craft for travelers. The cabin was fitted with sleeping bunks, but passengers provided their own bedding. From *History of Travel in America*, by Seymour Dunbar, copyright 1915, used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

extreme. Submerged logs, treacherous snags, sand bars and swirling currents took their annual toll of boats and men. Fortunate, indeed, was the crew that completed the round trip within six months.

The trip downstream, barring accidents, was made in a comparatively short time, but on the return trip the hardy boatmen toiled with long poles and oars from sunup to sundown to make headway against the swift current. Only men of iron sinew were fit for the ordeal. Flatboats, many of which were little more than rafts, were turned adrift in New Orleans or sold for firewood. Flatboatmen either returned home along the old Natchez Trace and other trails leading to Illinois or worked their passage upstream as oarsmen or polesmen on returning pirogues or keelboats. The overland trip was not without its dangers from unfriendly Indians, wild animals, or, still worse, from murderous highwaymen who lay in wait to relieve the returning boatmen of their proceeds from the trip.

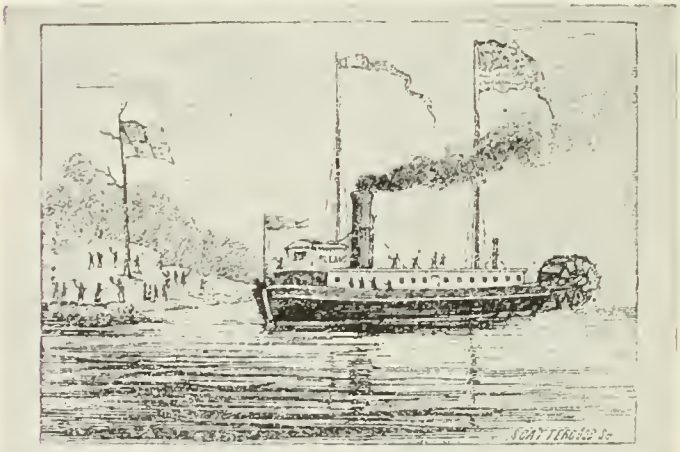
The first steamboat on western waters was the "New Orleans," which appeared at Shawneetown, Golconda and Fort Massac in 1811-12 en route from Pittsburgh to New Orleans, but it was not until 1817 that the first successful steamboat trip was made upstream from New Orleans to the Falls of the Ohio. The first steamboat to ascend the Mississippi River above the mouth of the Ohio was the "General Pike," which reached St. Louis in the same year. By 1820 there were seventy steamboats on western waters, and by 1830 more than 200 were reported.

The introduction of steamboats greatly facilitated river transportation, especially against the river currents, from New Orleans to Illinois and from Illinois to Louisville, Wheeling and Pittsburgh, but the cost of steamboat travel and freightage was so high that the use of flatboats and keelboats continued undiminished for many years. Abraham Lincoln, it will be recalled, piloted a flatboat from the Sangamon River to New Orleans as late as 1831.

In those days transportation costs by either land or water were so high as to impede both immigration and commerce.

In 1817 the steamboat fare from Shawneetown to New Orleans was around $55. From New Orleans to Shawneetown, against the river current, the fare was $110, and about a month was required for the journey.

The cost of overland travel varied. In 1822 a trip was made by wagon from Vandalia to Shawneetown and Kaskaskia and return, for which about 22 cents a mile was paid. Even as late as 1852 Colonel R. B. Mason, chief engineer of the Illinois Central Railroad, and a



FIRST BOAT BUILT ON THE WESTERN WATERS, 1812.

THE "NEW ORLEANS," of Pittsburgh, passed Shawneetown, Golconda and Fort Massac in the winter of 1811-12, en route to New Orleans. From *History of Travel in America*, by Seymour Dunbar, copyright 1915, used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

companion arranged for a liveryman to carry them from Decatur to Springfield, a distance of forty miles, for $15. This was at the rate of 17½ cents a mile for each person.

The cost of shipping freight was correspondingly high. In 1817 freightage from Pittsburgh down-river to Shawneetown was at the rate of $20 a ton, while the cost of transportation upstream from Shawneetown to Pittsburgh was as high as $70 a ton. The same ton of freight could be shipped from Shawneetown down-river to New Orleans for only $20, which explains why most of Illinois' outbound commerce of that period moved to New Orleans instead of to Pittsburgh and the East.

The cost of land freightage in Illinois in that period was usually at the rate of $10 per ton for each twenty miles.

It is readily seen that these prohibitive transportation costs checked the agricultural and industrial growth of the interior of Illinois. All important settlements were then located on the rivers, and the farther inland one was located the greater was the cost of getting his grain and other products to market.

High transportation costs also caused a great variation in commodity prices in different parts of the country. In 1825, for instance, wheat sold in Illinois for 25 cents a bushel while it brought as much as 87 cents in Virginia. In 1829 flour sold in St. Louis for around $5 a barrel while it was costing nearly twice that amount in Galena, the difference being due largely if not wholly to transportation costs.

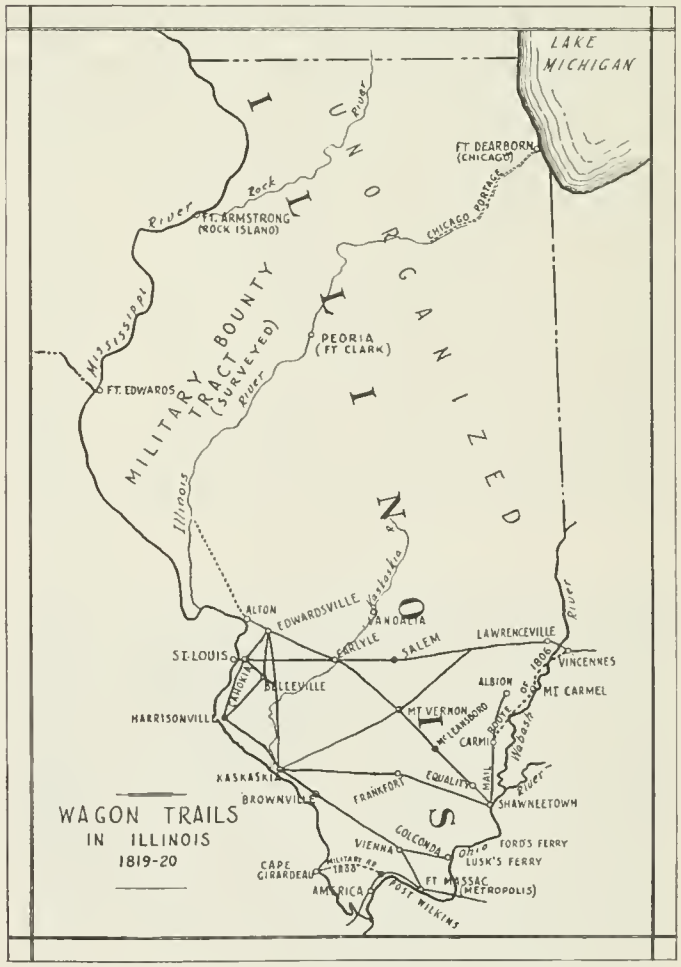
Although the cost of transportation gradually decreased as highway and river facilities were improved, it was left to the railroads to bring cheap all-year-round transportation to the great agricultural regions of the interior.

The federal and state governments were mutually interested in the improvement of transportation facilities in the unsettled interior of Illinois. Title to about nine-tenths of the total area of the state belonged to the federal government. These wild lands were offered to settlers at $2 an acre until 1820, and thereafter at $1.25 an acre, but there were few buyers because of the lack of transportation.

These vast tracts of wild lands could not be taxed by the state or by local governments so long as they remained unsold and unoccupied. The desire of the federal government to dispose of the public domain to settlers influenced its decision to extend the National Road, sometimes called the Cumberland Road, westward from Wheeling, through Ohio, Indiana and Illinois to the Mississippi River in the vicinity of St. Louis.

This great highway project was started at Cumberland, Md., in 1811 and was completed to the Ohio River at Wheeling in 1818. Its extension westward was urged by Henry Clay and others interested in the West, and in 1820 Congress authorized the survey.

In the meantime the capital of Illinois had been transferred from Kaskaskia to a point on the Kaskaskia River which was later fixed as the crossing of the National Road, one of the chief routes of pioneer travel into the new West. The federal project, which required



From early maps, Chicago Historical Society collection, Dana's *Description of Bounty Lands* (1819) and other sources. A map of 1823 shows roads or trails from Edwardsville to Vandalia, Illinoistown to Ripley, and Edwardsville to the Chicago portage route via Peoria.

many years to complete, terminated at Vandalia. Beyond that point state roads were used.

Vandalia, a mere hamlet of a few cabins, became the capital of Illinois in 1819, and old Kaskaskia, once the rival of New Orleans and St. Louis—a gay capital and commercial center before Chicago and Springfield were founded—was left to its proud memories.

Crude trails or narrow bridle paths were the only semblances of roads leading to the new capital. Until a year or two later, when a wagon road between Edwardsville and Vandalia was opened, the nearest highway worthy of the name was the old "Saint Louis Trace," the pioneer mail route, extending across the state from Vincennes through Lawrenceville, Maysville, Salem, Carlyle and Cahokia to the Mississippi River opposite St. Louis.

For many years this old post road was one of the most important thoroughfares in Illinois, and, indeed, in the whole western country. A travelers' guide, published in Cincinnati in 1819, lists this venerable highway as "Route No. 1," which formed an unbroken overland trail from Maine to the upper Missouri River country.

Over this route was operated the first stage coach line ever to link Illinois with the East, and probably the first coach line in the state. This line was established in 1820 and ran between Louisville and St. Louis. Through eastern connections it is said to have carried passengers and mails from Baltimore and other eastern cities to St. Louis in only three weeks. Taverns and "relay stations" were located every fifteen or twenty miles. Many descendants of the stage drivers still live in Salem and other towns along the route.

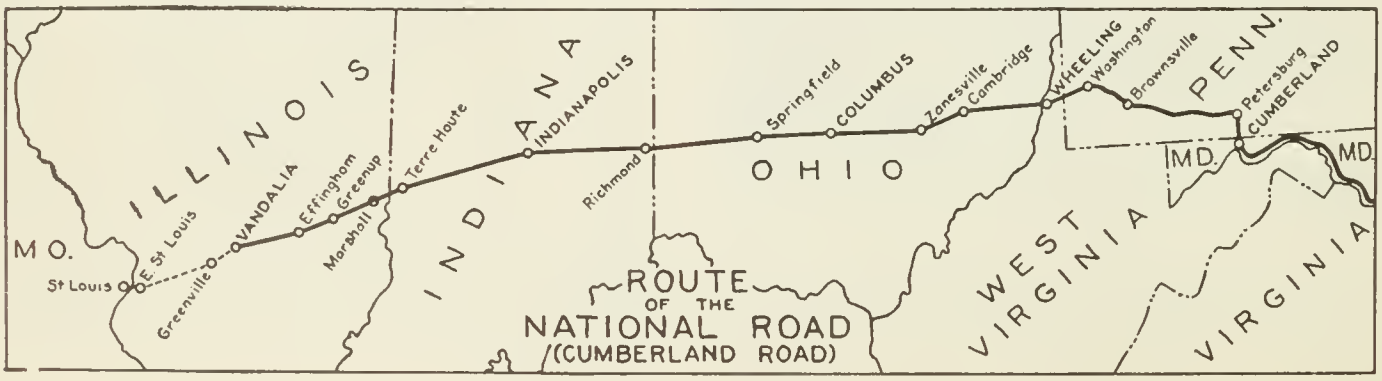
In this period Shawneetown and Golconda were important river gateways for migrants from Kentucky, Tennessee and other Southern states as well as for those coming down river from Pittsburgh and Cincinnati.

An important route of pioneer travel was from Shawneetown through Equality, McLeansboro, Mount Vernon and Carlyle to Edwardsville and Alton. From the latter point a trail led northwestwardly to the Military Bounty Tract, west of the Illinois River.

A road led from Edwardsville through Belleville to Harrisonville, on the Mississippi River. Edwardsville was also connected with Harrisonville by a road through Cahokia, and still another road led from Edwardsville direct to Kaskaskia. Kaskaskia was also reached by four other roads—one from Harrisonville, one from the "St. Louis Trace" west of Maysville, one from Shawneetown through Frankfort and Columbus, and one from Fort Massac and Golconda through Vienna. The latter, known as the "Kaskaskia Trail," was the route of some of the first American settlers in the Illinois country. A wagon trail also connected Shawneetown with Albion, in Edwards County.

Maps in the early 1820s show roads linking Vienna with Jonesboro, Brownville with Jonesboro and America, and Illinoistown with the Edwardsville-Vandalia road at Ripley or Greenville.

By 1821 the fertile Sangamon Valley was attracting settlers. Sangamon County was organized in that year, and a log court-house was erected on the site of the present city of Springfield. Soon thereafter a wagon trail was opened between that point and Vandalia. A trail was also broken from Edwardsville to Springfield and extended northward to the Peoria outpost on the Illinois River. As the first thoroughfare linking northern and southern Illinois, this pioneer trail figured prominently in the early history of the state.



EMIGRANTS HALT FOR THE NIGHT—Night after night spent in the open, day after day of slow progress across the prairies, the pioneers pressed on to contribute their bit to the making of Illinois and the Great West. Courtesy, Chicago Historical Society.

In a period of six years, from 1819 to 1825, the Illinois legislature organized thirty new counties, eighteen of which were in the interior of the state. A lone settler's cabin might be designated as a county seat, but presently that cabin would be surrounded by a sizable cluster of crude structures, including a county court-house, a jail, a tavern, two or three stores of a sort and in time a postoffice. With few exceptions the county seats also became the business and transportation centers of the counties.

A few stout-hearted pioneers were now penetrating far inland and hewing their homes out of the timber along the streams. John Hendrix and John Dawson erected the first cabins within the present confines of McLean County in 1822. In the same year Henry Sadorus settled in what is now Champaign County, many miles from the nearest neighbor.

These first settlers were far from markets, and the pathless prairie was their only highway. The present generation can never know the loneliness of these prairie pioneers, the privations and hardships they endured, the difficulties they experienced in getting to and from distant trading centers. Before 1825, when the first grist mill was erected at Blooming Grove, settlers were obliged to drive overland, through sloughs and unbridged streams, to Attica on the Wabash River, 125 miles distant, to have their wheat ground into flour, or to Green's Mill, near where Ottawa now stands, eighty miles away.

Long trips were sometimes made to obtain salt. Plow irons were carried fifty or sixty miles on horseback to be sharpened, three or four days being required for the round trip. In the winter families were sometimes completely isolated for weeks at a time.

Settlers raised their own wool and flax, tanned their own leather and made their own boots and shoes. The women of the prairies spun and wove their own cloth, made jeans and other clothing and knit heavy wool garments to protect against the chill blasts of winter.

Aside from Indians and wolves, the prairie travelers had to keep constantly alert for rattlesnakes. So common were these reptiles in pioneer days that a horseman was known to kill as many as twenty-five in a single day with a cattlewhip.

But far more troublesome were the green-headed flies that swarmed in great numbers over the whole western country in the 1820s, to the discomfort of man and beast. During "fly time" each summer, a period of about six weeks, the only way to escape the torture of their fearful bites was to travel at night, and then only when the moon was absent. So vicious were the bites of these insects that horses exposed to their attacks were liable to die from pain, loss of blood or exhaustion due to incessant kicking to rid themselves of their tormentors.

CROSSING THE RIVER—Before the days of bridges, the problem of crossing rivers too deep to be forded was partly solved by the flatboat ferry. From *History of Travel in America*, by Seymour Dunbar, copyright 1915, used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

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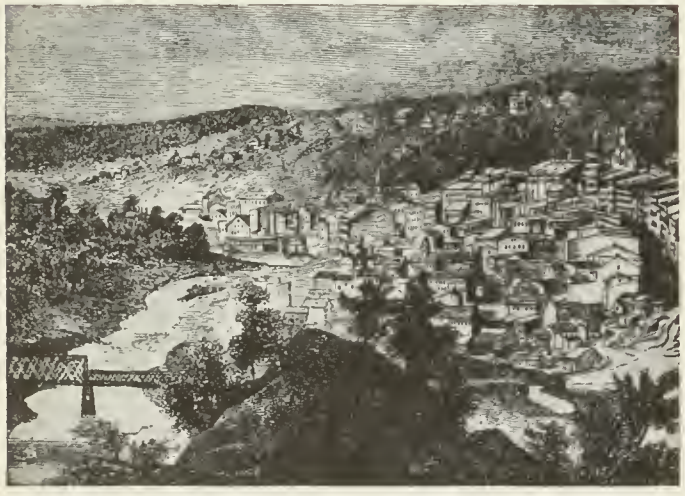
CHAPTER III

Early Trails to Chicago and Galena

UNTIL 1823 the northern part of Illinois was an unbroken wilderness. Aside from the fur depots at Fort Dearborn (Chicago), Old Bunkun (Iroquois), Hennepin and Peoria, and a few lead prospectors and miners in the northwestern corner of the state, the country was virtually uninhabited except by Indians. Not a single wagon trail existed in this part of the state.

In that year Gurdon S. Hubbard, youthful agent of the American Fur Company, established a trading post at the present site of Danville, on the Big Vermillion River, and beat down a pack trail from that point through what are now Rossville and Watseka to Fort Dearborn, a distance of 125 miles—the first trail established by white men to the site of the future metropolis. Hubbard also extended his pack trail from the Danville post in a great half-circle through what later became Champaign, Piatt, Moultrie, Shelby, Effingham and Jasper counties to Vincennes. At Danville the trail intersected the old Indian path which extended southward through the Wabash Valley to Vincennes.

"Hubbard's Trace" north of Danville was made a state road in 1834, by which time it had become an important route of travel and trade between Chicago and the Wabash country. Entering Chicago along the western boundary of the Fort Dearborn Reservation, this old state road became State Street, now one of the most famous thoroughfares in America.



THE "FIRST AMERICAN KLONDIKE"—Galena, scene of the first important mining rush in American history, was once the chief commercial city north of St. Louis. The Illinois Central Railroad brought the "Iron Horse" to Galena in 1854. From *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, July, 1853, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

Along this historic trail in 1827 dashed the "Paul Revere of the Prairies," Hubbard himself, on his memorable ride from Chicago to Danville to sound the alarm of the Winnebago uprising which threatened a second Fort Dearborn massacre at the Chicago post. Twenty hours after leaving Chicago the intrepid rider pulled his foaming horse up before the cabin of Peleg Spencer in the southern outskirts of Danville. The alarm was quickly sounded through the scattered settlement, and within a few hours a hastily organized relief expedition, equipped with flint-lock muskets and pistols, and led by young Hubbard, was hurrying northward. On the evening of the fourth day after Hubbard had left Chicago, the "Vermillion Rangers" reached Chicago, where they remained to protect the little settlement until a runner arrived at the fort bearing the good news that Chief Red Bird and his warriors had been captured.

In the same year that "Hubbard's Trace" was blazed to Fort Dearborn, fresh discoveries of lead in the hill country of northwestern Illinois were beginning to arouse widespread interest. Galena, the center of the new lead region, was beyond the frontier, in the heart of the wild "Black Hawk Country." Its nearest neighbor was Peoria, on the Illinois River, and a wilderness, vast and unbroken, separated the two. The Peoria outpost was reached overland by the old "Fort Clark and Wabash Trail" from Terre Haute, an old Indian trail from Danville, and by the newly opened post road from Springfield. North and west of Peoria only Indian trails existed, and none led directly to the lead country.

The first steamboat to arrive at Galena was the "Virginian," in 1823. Thereafter an intermittent steamboat service was maintained between the lead country and St. Louis, but dur-

ing the winter, when the river was frozen and the country was covered with snow, the mining settlements were reached only with the greatest difficulty across the rolling prairies, through tangled and frozen swamps and over treacherous river ice. Despite its inaccessibility, prospectors and adventurers were flocking to this new El Dorado.

In 1825 Oliver Kellogg broke a wagon trail from Peoria northward to a crossing of the Rock River at a place called Ogee's Ferry, above the site of the present city of Dixon, and thence to Galena along a route roughly paralleling that over which the Illinois Central Railroad was built nearly twenty years later. John Dixon, one of the notable pioneers of northern Illinois, employed some Winnebago Indians to ferry wagons across by means of two canoes placed side by side, each canoe supporting the wheels of one side of the wagon. The horses were forced to swim. The river crossing was later moved to the Dixon site, where a flatboat ferry was installed.

In 1826 a man named Bolles blazed a second and more direct trail between Dixon's and Galena, and shortly thereafter the "Lewiston Trail," branching from "Kellogg's Trail" near the northern boundary of Peoria County and crossing Rock River just above Prophetstown, in Whiteside County, provided a still more direct route from Peoria and southern Illinois to the mines.

The first postoffice in the lead country was established at Galena in 1826, and the mails were conveyed on horseback once a fortnight between Vandalia and Galena through Peoria. Two years later Dixon erected a log tavern and trading post at the ferry and brought his family here to live, for a time the only family on Rock River above Black Hawk's village.

In pioneer days "Kellogg's Trail" and Dixon's Ferry were known far and wide. Over this storied trail poured a motley caravan—New Englanders, New Yorkers, Pennsylvanians, Ohioans, Virginians, Kentuckians, in Conestoga wagons, in buckboards, in oxcarts, on foot and on horseback—lured by the magic word "Lead," just as the word "Gold" lured thousands to California two decades later. Galena became the scene of the first important mining rush in American history.

Thousands of adventurous pioneers poured

A "Bullwhacker"—From *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, July, 1867, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

into the upper Mississippi country and the trans-Mississippi region over this and other trails leading to Galena and Dubuque. Along these trails in 1832 hurried General Winfield Scott's hastily organized expedition to quell the Black Hawk uprising, an expedition that included Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Albert Sidney Johnston, William Hamilton, son of Alexander Hamilton, Robert Anderson, of Fort Sumter fame, Nathan Boone, son of the great Boone of Kentucky, and other notables. John Dixon was friend and counselor of Indian and white man alike. His tavern was a favorite gathering place for the officers, and it is said that under its hospitable roof Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis met for the first time.

The Black Hawk War marked an epoch in Illinois history. It removed for all time the menace of the savage east of the Mississippi River, a menace which had hindered settlement, especially in the northern part of the state. Shortly after the termination of the war, the first important Yankee migration set in toward the "Black Hawk Country," which now began

HAULING ORE FROM THE MINES—The difficulty of transporting ore from mines to furnaces and lead from furnaces to markets, over miserable roads and across unbridged streams, accentuated the need for railroads. From *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, June, 1865, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

to attract the settler as well as the miner. Galena soon became the most important commercial center in the entire western country north of St. Louis.

In this period the principal currents of travel and trade in the Mississippi Valley were north and south, to and from New Orleans. Thousands of tons of lead were shipped down river, to St. Louis and New Orleans, each season. At one time in the 1830s or 1840s twelve to fifteen steamboats were loading or unloading on the Fever River in the vicinity of Galena.

In the winter months and during periods of low water some lead was shipped from the Galena region by wagons or sleds, but the miserable condition of the roads and the absence of bridges made this a costly form of transportation.

Many teamsters from southern Illinois drove 4- and 6-yoke ox-teams to the Galena mines to engage during the summer months in transporting lead from the diggings to the furnaces and steamboat landings. Their long overland journeys to and from Galena consumed many days, during which they rarely came in sight of a white man's habitation. Where there was no trace of a road, they drove across open country.

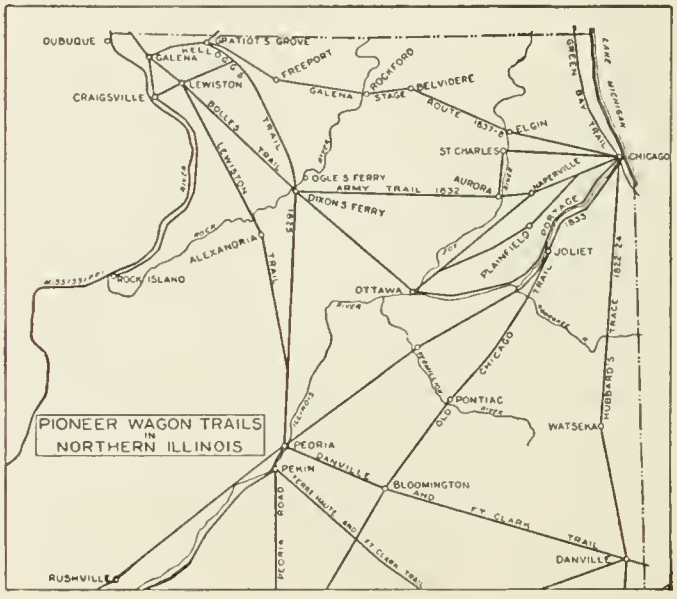
The first wagon-load of lead from Galena to Chicago arrived at the Chicago River in the summer of 1829, before anything more than native paths existed east of Dixon's Ferry. This trip, consuming eleven days, is said to have been the first ever made by wagon between the "Galena Lead Country" and Lake Michigan.

The first wagon road between Chicago and Dixon's was broken through Naperville and Aurora by General Scott's army in 1832. Two years later it became a state road, and a weekly stage line was opened over this route between Chicago and Galena by way of Dixon's Ferry. About 1838 a second stage line was established over a more northerly route through Elgin, Belvidere, Rockford and Freeport, striking "Kellogg's Trail" at Gratiot's Grove, near Warren. For fifteen years thereafter, until replaced by the railroads, stage coach service was maintained over these pioneer routes.

For several years the lead city rivaled Chicago as a trade and distributing center, and as late as 1842 its wholesale trade actually surpassed that of Chicago. In that period its mining operations were the most extensive in the West.

The first direct wagon trail from Bloomington to Chicago was broken in 1833, the year Chicago was organized as a town. Known to the settlers of central Illinois as the "Old Chicago Trail" and to Chicagoans as "Archer's Road," this thoroughfare played an important role in the early transportation history of Illinois. As the north end of "Hubbard's Trace" became State Street, so the north end of the "Old Chicago Trail" became Archer Avenue, one of the prominent thoroughfares of Chicago.

Into the bustling little town of Chicago over this long prairie trail came the drovers, expert horsemen, picturesque in their trappings, bringing droves of cattle, sheep and hogs from the



Salt Creek country and the Mackinaw Valley. This was the trail of John Dawson and other prairie pioneers who brought to Chicago some of the first grain shipped from the lake port to Eastern markets. Southwestward from Chicago over this trail traveled some of the first Yankee immigrants to establish their homes in central Illinois.

For several years not a bridge existed along the entire route from Bloomington to Chicago, and in times of high water great difficulty was experienced in crossing the Mackinaw and Kankakee rivers. Mackinaw ford, near Lexington, was the worst of all, dreaded by teamster, drover and immigrant alike.

Springfield became the seat of government in 1837, and a trail to Bloomington and the "Old Chicago Trail" provided the most direct route between the new capital and Chicago. More than likely it was the route taken by Abraham Lincoln in 1844 on the first visit the "Sage of the Sangamon" is known to have paid to the city which was destined to become one of his great political battlegrounds.

CHAPTER IV

Internal Improvements

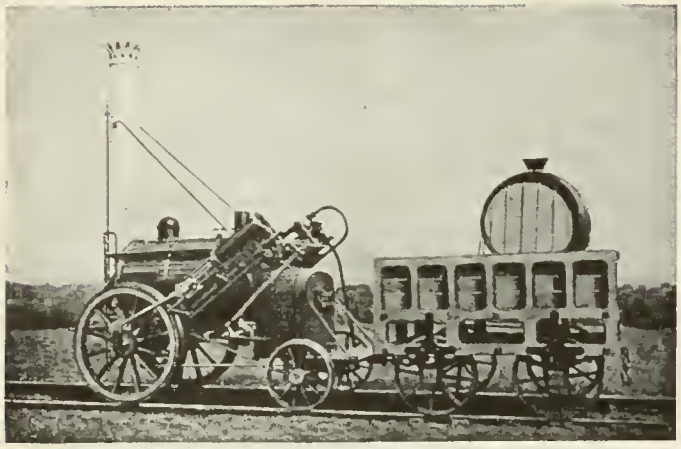
CANAL BOATS—Courtesy, *Wings of a Century*, A Century of Progress Exposition.

LACK of transportation facilities in the interior was the greatest impediment to Illinois' agricultural and industrial development. Citizens of the state recognized that a system of transportation superior to mud roads was necessary if Illinois was to take its place among the progressive commonwealths of the Union.

New York had built the great Erie Canal, opened in 1825. Pennsylvania and New Jersey had developed canal systems. Ohio was moving in the same direction. For many years a canal connecting the Chicago and Illinois rivers had been discussed. Shortly after the close of the war with England, in 1814, President James Madison had proposed such a waterway to Congress. Every governor of Illinois from the time of its admission to statehood, in 1818, had urged the construction of the canal.

In 1827 Congress granted Illinois alternate sections of land for five miles on either side of the proposed route to aid in financing the project. Included in this grant were large areas of the present city of Chicago, including part of the famous "Loop" business district. Townsites were laid out on canal lands at Chicago and Ottawa in 1830. Three years later, when the town of Chicago was incorporated, the settlement boasted twenty-four voters.

Little did those early Chicagoans dream that some of them would live to see the day when a great metropolis would replace their humble collection of log cabins and that many of their children would live to see the city become one



THE "ROCKET," built in 1829, was the first successful steam locomotive in the world.

of the world's greatest industrial and commercial centers and its greatest railway center.

It is safe to assume, however, that these early citizens were alive to the possibilities of railroads. Their imaginations were kindled, no doubt, by accounts of experiments which were then being conducted in the East. From Baltimore came reports of trips made by Peter Cooper's steam locomotive, "Tom Thumb." At Charleston, in South Carolina, the locomotive "Best Friend," was transporting persons and goods four times faster than they were being moved on the Eastern canals and at twice the speed of horse-drawn vehicles. In New Orleans another "puffing steam wagon" was arousing much interest.

These new developments caused many thoughtful citizens of Illinois to question the wisdom of building the long-contemplated Illinois and Michigan Canal.

Agitation for a railroad in lieu of a waterway began as early as 1831, at the very dawn of the railway era in America, when Chicago was a mere hamlet and there were but a few small settlements elsewhere in northern Illinois.

In the spring of that year James M. Bucklin, chief engineer of the canal project, surveyed two routes, one for the Illinois and Michigan Canal, which he estimated would cost $100,000 a mile, and one for the Illinois and Michigan Railroad, which he estimated would cost $25,000 a mile. After journeying to Baltimore and conferring with the engineers of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Bucklin returned to Illinois and urged the abandonment of the canal scheme and the construction of the railroad. He gained the support of the canal commissioners and Governor Reynolds, and on their recommendation the Illinois legislature, in 1833, authorized the railroad. Congress also authorized the change.

But that was the canal era. Very few steam locomotives were then in use in America, and the performance of most of them was far from satisfactory. A storm of protest arose against the change, and, upon taking office, Governor Duncan addressed a message to the legislature strenuously opposing the railway project and taking sharp issue with those who favored its substitution for the canal.

"Of the different plans proposed," said Governor Duncan, "I find that the board of canal commissioners, and my worthy predecessors, have recommended a rail road, in which I regret that I am compelled to differ. . . . . In my judgment, experience has shown canals to be much more useful, and generally cheaper of construction, than rail roads. When well made they require less expensive repairs, and are continually improving, and will last forever, while railroads are kept in repair at heavy expense, and will last but about fifteen years. . . . . There seems to be but little force . . . . in the argument commonly used in favor of rail roads, that transportation upon them is uninterrupted in winter, as the canal will be open several weeks longer in the fall and spring than either the lake or river, consequently no inconvenience can result from its closing. . . . ."

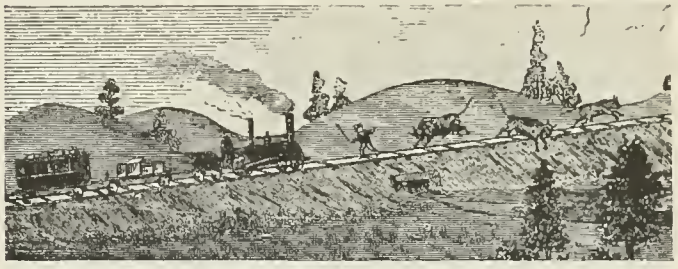
Governor Duncan's views finally prevailed. The railway project was temporarily abandoned, and the construction of the canal was begun in 1836. Lack of funds, political wranglings and other impediments delayed progress and at times entirely suspended work on the project, with the result that the canal was not completed and opened for operation until the spring of 1848. For the next few years, until Illinois turned decisively to railroads, the Illinois and Michigan Canal was an important artery of commerce and travel between Chicago and the Illinois and Mississippi river basins. One important effect of the waterway was to make the Illinois River valley largely tributary to Chicago instead of St. Louis, as it had previously been.

Paradoxical as it seems, the canal probably benefited Chicago and other communities along the route more before it was completed than it did afterward. The promise of great benefits to come, held out by canal enthusiasts and real estate promoters, stimulated settlement and increased land values in the 1830s and 1840s. Although the canal enjoyed a substantial packet trade for some years, it never played the great role its supporters had predicted for it as an agency of transportation.

Long before the waterway was completed, railway transportation in the East had conclusively demonstrated its superiority over canal transportation, and the railway fever had begun to sweep the country. Forward-looking citizens of Illinois foresaw in some degree the benefits which would result from railway development, though they did not foresee the tremendously important part it was to play in the future of their state.

As early as 1832, the year of the Black Hawk War, Alexander M. Jenkins, of Jackson County, then speaker of the house, had proposed a "Central" railroad between the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, at the present site of Cairo, and the western terminus of the proposed Illinois and Michigan Canal. It was a daring proposal considering that it involved the construction of nearly 300 miles of railroad through an uninhabited region, a mileage equal to the total length of all railroads then existing on the North American continent.

By 1835 the proposed "Central Railroad" had become an important political issue. Shortly after the legislature convened in that year a bill was introduced to incorporate a company with authority to build a railroad "commencing at or near the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers and extending to Galena." Among the prominent supporters of the measure, besides Jenkins, were Abraham Lincoln, then serving his first term as a representative from Sangamon County, and Judge Sidney A. Breese, of Carlyle, who in later years, as United States Senator from Illinois, promoted the land-grant idea which led to the actual construction of the Illinois Central and numerous other western railroads in the period 1850-75.



Disputing the Right-of-Way—An exciting moment on Illinois' pioneer railroad, the Northern Cross, between Meredosia and Springfield. From *Potter's American Monthly*, July, 1879.

The bill creating "The Illinois Central Railroad Company" was passed in January, 1836. Communities located along the route were naturally elated over the prospects of getting the railroad. Communities located elsewhere began to agitate for branch lines linking them to the "Central."

So great became the clamor throughout the state for railroads and other internal improvements that in February, 1837, the legislature passed the historic Internal Improvement Act, providing for a network of 1,341 miles of state-owned railroads extending into all parts of Illinois, except the northeast corner, which was to be served by the canal then under construction.

The backbone of this extensive system of state-owned railroads was to be the Illinois Central Railroad, extending from Cairo to Galena, through Mount Pleasant, Frankfort, Mount Vernon, Salem, Vandalia, Shelbyville, Decatur, Bloomington, Peru, Dixon and Savannah. The charter of 1836 was taken over by the state.

Four railroads, intersecting the "Central," were to traverse the state in an east-and-west direction, as follows: (1) From Warsaw, on the Mississippi River, to Bloomington, through Carthage, Macomb, Canton, Peoria and Mackinaw; (2) the Northern Cross, from Quincy to the Indiana state line through Clayton, Mount

The "Rogers"—A replica of the first locomotive to turn a wheel in Illinois. Courtesy, Chicago Historical Society.

Sterling, Meredosia, Jacksonville, Springfield, Decatur, Sidney and Danville; (3) from Alton to the Indiana line through Hillsboro, Shelbyville, Charleston and Paris; (4) from Alton to Mount Carmel on the Wabash River through Edwardsville, Carlyle, Salem, Fairfield and Albion. In addition, there were to be two branch lines: from Mackinaw to Pekin through Tremont, and from Carlyle to Belleville. The act also called for the improvement of several rivers.

This stupendous project was to be financed

"Fast Freight" in 1845—One mishap after another finally led the Northern Cross Railroad to abandon its locomotive and turn to mule power. From *Potter's American Monthly*, July, 1879.

by borrowed money, estimated at approximately $10,000,000, but this was soon found to be less than half enough. The state government was thus committed to a debt of at least $20,000,000, or about $268 for every family in Illinois at that time.

The collapse of this then-impossible undertaking, characterized by one historian as "Illinois' supreme folly," left the state in 1840 with a debt burden of $14,000,000, about half of which had been spent on railway construction, and with only twenty-four miles of completed road to show for its costly venture into the transportation business.

This 24-mile railroad—the first steam railroad in Illinois—was a part of the Northern Cross project. The completed portion extended from the Illinois River at Meredosia to Jacksonville. It was crudely built of wooden rails upon which thin straps of iron were spiked.

Meredosia, in Morgan County, holds the proud distinction of being the birthplace of steam railway transportation in Illinois. Here, in the spring of 1837 occurred the groundbreaking ceremony which signalized the commencement of this pioneer railroad. Construction proceeded slowly toward Jacksonville. The first rail was laid at Meredosia on May 9, 1838.

The first locomotive ever built for an Illinois railroad was shipped from the East by water in the summer of 1838. After many weeks of anxious waiting the engine was reported "lost in transit." There is no record that it ever turned up or that the mystery surrounding its strange disappearance was ever solved.

The first locomotive ever to turn a wheel in Illinois was the "Rogers," built in Paterson, N. J., in the same summer and shipped from New York to New Orleans by sailing vessel, thence by steamboat or barge up the Mississippi and Illinois rivers to Meredosia.

The "Rogers" was a mere toy compared with the powerful giants of today. It had but one set of driving wheels two feet in diameter, and two sets of smaller wheels in front. There was no closed cab, no whistle, no spark arrester, no cow catcher, no bell. On its first run a few miles out of Meredosia, on November 8, 1838, the townspeople "could not understand its power. What made the wheels go round was a mystery they could not solve, and not a few were ready to award some supernatural power to the smoking monster."

Regular train service between Meredosia and Morgan City, a distance of twelve miles, was inaugurated on July 8, 1839, but not without the strenuous opposition of the stage coach line which paralleled the route. The railway company announced that the train would include "pleasure cars" for passengers as well as "burden cars" for freight shipments. The train tried to make the 12-mile run, with stops, in two hours. At Morgan City a connection was made with the stage coach line to Jacksonville, and in advertising the service the company called attention to the fact that the entire 24-mile trip by rail and stage between Meredosia and Jacksonville was performed in daylight.

By January 1, 1840, the railhead had reached Jacksonville, where it remained for more than two years following the collapse of the internal improvement project which virtually bankrupted the state government.

In the spring of 1842 sufficient funds were obtained to extend the road to Springfield. The arrival of the first train at Springfield on May 13, 1842, was the signal for an enthusiastic celebration. One old settler who brought his family to the railroad to see the train go by expressed the fear that if the locomotive ever ran near

his farm his cows would stop giving milk.

According to a local newspaper, "the cars ran from Jacksonville, 33½ miles, in two hours and eight minutes, including stoppages." The newspaper expressed the optimistic belief that "the distance could be passed over in an hour and a half." A traveler over this road in 1842 recalled that grass and weeds covered the rails and caused the engine's wheels to slip. At one place the passengers were called upon to "pitch in" and help the crew carry buckets of water from a creek to fill the engine tank.

The first attempt to operate a steam railroad in Illinois could hardly be called a success. Accidents were of common occurrence. The engine frequently left the track and toppled over into the ditch. Finally, after a series of misfortunes, mule power was substituted and the only locomotive then in use was sold. The new owner fitted the engine with wide tires and attempted to run it on the public roads or across the prairies. The engine thus equipped is said to have made a trip between Springfield and Alton, but not without the frequent aid of a strong yoke of oxen. Some persons, observing the tracks of this strange contrivance, were so mystified that they trailed them some distance across country to ascertain what kind of a juggernaut had visited their community. Their curiosity was satisfied when they came upon the engine, abandoned by its discouraged owner. The Northern Cross Railroad, which had cost the state a million dollars, was finally auctioned off in 1847 for $21,500.

In 1837, the same year that ground was broken for the Northern Cross Railroad, two other short lines were built in Illinois. One of these, known as Charles Collins' railroad, extended four miles out of Naples, on the Illinois River. The other, built by former Governor John Reynolds and associates and known as the Coal-Mine Bluff Railroad, extended from Illinoistown (now East St. Louis) to a coal mine on the Mississippi Bluff, about six miles distant.

Both Collins' and Reynolds' roads were crudely built of wooden rails, without strap iron, and were operated by horse or mule power. Neither of them was operated on a set schedule; neither was a public carrier of passengers or freight.

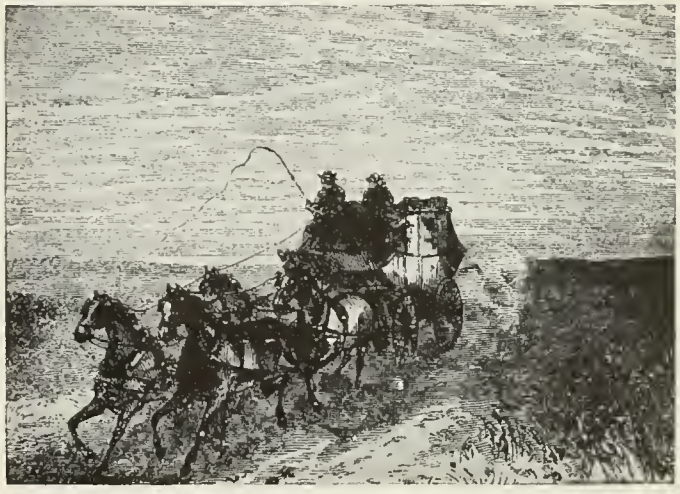
CHAPTER V

The Stage Coach Era

WHEN the old Northern Cross Railroad, between Meredosia and Springfield, turned from locomotives to mules, Illinois found itself back where it started a half-dozen years before—dependent entirely upon animal power for overland transportation.

The federal government had extended the National Road, only partly completed, as far west as Vandalia, and a few more dirt trails had been designated as state roads. Indeed, the statute books were filled with legislative acts making this or that trail a state road, but as someone observed, "it took more than a legislative act to eliminate the mud holes," and mud holes there were aplenty.

The black prairie soil of Illinois, sprinkled with a heavy rain, turned the best roads into interminable sloughs. Forest roads were a succession of puddles, gullies, upturned roots, stumps, twists, turns and overhead brambles, which tried the souls of men and made travel a never-to-be-forgotten ordeal.



STAGE COACH ON THE ROAD—By traveling day and night, with a change of horses every few miles, coaches sometimes covered 75 to 90 miles a day, when conditions were favorable. From *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, July, 1867, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

This was the heyday of stage coach travel. Since the advent in 1820 of the pioneer stage coach line on the old Vincennes-St. Louis road, several other lines, providing fortnightly, weekly, semi-weekly or daily passenger and mail service, had been established in the settled portions of Illinois.

The first stage coach line in northern Illinois began operating between Niles, Mich., and Chicago in 1833, during the first rush of Yankee migration. In that year the government improved the old Indian trail between Detroit and Chicago, and a tri-weekly line of stages was inaugurated over the route. The popular Concord coach was used, and there were relays of fresh horses every few miles. Galena by way of Dixon's Ferry was established by Temple in the same year. A few years later a Chicago-Galena stage line by way of Rockford was in operation and by 1846 tri-weekly stages were running between Chicago and Galena both by way of Dixon and by way of Rockford and Freeport. A daily stage line was in service between Chicago and Peoria.

Arrivals and departures of stages at Chicago numbered eight daily in 1846, with an average of fifteen passengers to the coach.

Between Chicago and Galena and between Chicago and Peoria, the scheduled running time was forty-eight hours, but stages frequently arrived at their destinations many hours late, and complete suspensions of service

An Emigrant Train of Prairie Schooners—A familiar scene in pioneer days. Courtesy, Chicago Historical Society.

The Chicago Road formed the western extension of the government pike along the southern shore of Lake Erie. During the 1830s and 1840s this was one of the great thoroughfares of emigrant travel, and, according to Milo M. Quaife, in *Chicago Highways, Old and New*, "the migration which poured along it into the New West was no less significant or picturesque than that which at a later period immortalized the Oregon Trail."

Stage coach travel increased so rapidly that in 1835 daily departures were made from Detroit for Chicago, and "travelers were compelled to make reservations in advance."

Chicago soon became the center of an extensive coach line service. In 1834 Dr. John L. Temple began operating an "elegant, through-brace coach carriage" between Chicago and Ottawa by way of Plainfield—the first stage coach to run west of Chicago. A line of weekly stages between Chicago and for days or weeks at a time were not uncommon in periods of deep snows or heavy rains which rendered the roads impassable.

Westward, during this period, along the Chicago Road, the Danville-Bloomington road, the National Road and other overland trails, and even across the open prairies; moved picturesque caravans of covered wagons, the advance guard of the mighty migration that was to sweep the continent in the wake of railway development in the years to come.

Usually several prairie schooners traveled together, forming what was commonly known as an "emigrant train," so that if one of the cumbersome wagons became mired in the mud or stuck in fording a stream, as frequently occurred, ample ox-, horse- and man-power was on hand to extricate the vehicle. The difficulties of crossing unbridged rivers and streams were sometimes formidable, but still greater problems were presented by the fre-

quent sloughs in which wagons sometimes became almost hopelessly bogged.

When an especially bad slough was encountered all available teams were sometimes hitched together to pull the prairie schooners through, one by one. Occasionally the combined strength of all ox- and horse-power was not equal to the task, and it was necessary to wait for the next emigrant train to provide reinforcements.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the wretchedness of Illinois roads in the 1840s, as evidenced by the writings of numerous travelers who were compelled to use them. The Whisky Point Road, extending westward from Chicago, "was a fair sample of them all," according to Edwin O. Gale, in his *Reminiscences of Early Chicago and Vicinity*.

"When the frosts had come and the flowers gone, when the rains had filled the ground with moisture . . . making every depression a slough . . . then the wheels sank to the hubs, and the hearts of the drivers sank correspondingly. . . . The spring was worse, if possible, than the fall. . . . Woe to the farmer then who should presume to transport anything without a caravan of neighbors to assist with extra teams, to 'pack' the bags of grain from one stalled wagon to another."

With such transportation conditions to contend with, is there any wonder that the interior of the state had been slow in settling up and that millions of acres of fertile government lands in central Illinois had been on the market for years without purchasers at $1.25 an acre?

The comparatively few farmers who had located on the prairies, distant from water transportation, were compelled to make long, tedious overland journeys to St. Louis, Chicago, Peoria, Terre Haute and Vincennes to exchange their products for a few simple necessities. Upon arrival it was not uncommon for a farmer to learn that the market to which he had come was overstocked. Under such circumstances, he could count himself fortunate if he succeeded in disposing of his load for enough to defray the cost of his trip.

Farmers were usually reasonably certain of being able to dispose of wheat at Chicago or St. Louis at some price, and there was a market at those centers for a limited number of hogs and cattle. A few of the larger cattlemen found it to their advantage to drive herds on the hoof from western and central Illinois to New York and Philadelphia, a trip which required several weeks. In the late 1840s, when Chicago had become a sizable market, cattle and sheep were being driven to that market, on the hoof, from points as far distant as Danville, Bloomington, Pekin and Freeport.

Trips to market by wagon were usually made in the summer and fall, before the roads became next to impassable. Whenever possible, several neighbors would make the trip together; otherwise an effort would be made to "fall in" with some caravan en route. The farmers loaded their prairie wagons with wheat, salt pork, tallow and other products, and outfitted themselves with blankets, frying pans, coffee pots and provisions enough to last several days. With a team of four horses or six oxen, they were off at the first glimmerings of dawn.

A trip of 100 miles to market, barring serious mishaps, might be made in four or five days. A day would be required to dispose of the load and do the trading, and the return trip, with a light load, might be made in from three to four days, depending upon road conditions and the endurance of the animals. On these long journeys oxen frequently perished in the yoke and horses were cut or bruised in fording streams or bogging in the mire. The wear and tear on the wagons also added to the cost of going to market.

PREPARING BREAKFAST

ROUGH GOING—A stage coach trip over rough frontier trails was an experience not soon forgotten. From *History of Travel in America*, by Seymour Dunbar, copyright 1915, used by special permission of the publishers, The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

But one man's loss was another's gain. An especially bad stretch of road or a difficult river crossing brought many demands upon nearby farmers for ox- or horse-teams to help pull the marooned wagons and coaches out of the mire or up the steep river bank. A ford might prove more profitable than many acres of wheat or corn, and the farmer located near an exceptionally bad mud hole on a well-traveled road was envied by his less fortunately situated neighbors.

Under such unfavorable travel conditions as then prevailed in Illinois, it is not surprising that the citizens took a lively interest in accounts which reached them of the Russian plank roads in Canada, the first of which had been introduced in 1834. The plank road was constructed of heavy boards or planking laid crosswise upon parallel rows of heavy wooden sills. The craze for plank roads reached Illinois in 1844, and during the legislative session that winter three companies applied for charters to build plank roads leading from Chicago.

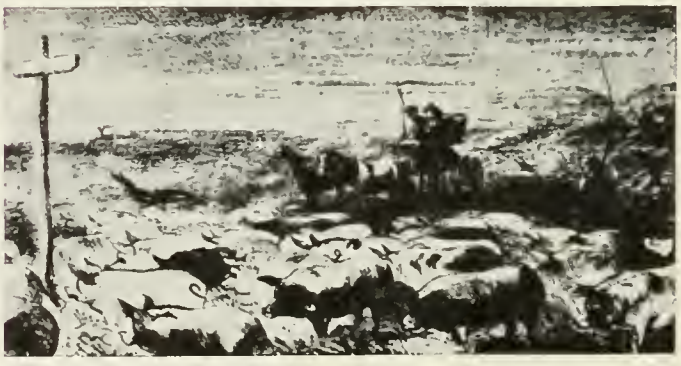
It was not until 1850, however, that the first section of Chicago's pioneer plank road was opened for traffic. This road, sixteen miles in length, was known as the Southwestern Plank Road, because it ran in a southwesterly direction from Chicago. It was a private enterprise which, like other plank road projects, obtained its revenue from tolls. During the next two years the road was extended first to Naperville and then to Oswego in Kendall County, with branches to Sycamore and Little Rock.

Encouraged by the success of the Southwestern, which enjoyed a thriving business from the start, several other companies were soon formed to undertake similar projects. Within two or three years Chicago was served by four other plank roads, one extending northward along the lake shore, another in a northwesterly direction to the Des Plaines River, another westward through Elgin to Genoa, and another south ten miles to Kyle's Tavern. Three plank roads were built out of Freeport, and other plank roads were projected from Beardstown, Pekin, Canton, Rushville, Belleville and a few other central and southern Illinois towns.

The plank road served a useful purpose. It facilitated trade and travel. It enabled farmers to work their fields in good weather and go to market during rainy or wet weather. The farmer could load his wagon heavier. Deaths and injuries to oxen and horses and the wear on wagons were reduced. However, plank roads were costly to build and maintain, and with the introduction of railroads in the 1850s, the use of plank roads declined rapidly. Many soon fell into disuse and decay, and one by one the plank road companies passed out of existence.

Few plank roads reached far back into the interior. The greater part of Illinois was unaffected by their rise and decline. Travel and transportation in the prairie country continued to depend upon a few rude trails and dirt roads.

A graphic description of travel conditions in the early 1850s is left by Col. Roswell B. Mason, chief engineer of the Illinois Central Railroad. Referring to a trip which he and a companion made from Cairo to Chicago in November, 1852, Colonel Mason said:



DRIVING HOGS TO MARKET—Many drovers brought hogs on the hoof for long distances to the Chicago market. From *Harper's Weekly*, October 31, 1868, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

"Leaving Cairo November 18, we reached Vandalia on the 23d and Decatur on the 25th, with our team nearly exhausted and unable to go farther. The road was so bad it was thought nearly impossible to get through, and it was determined to go to Springfield, then to Alton by the newly completed railroad, and into Chicago by water. We found it difficult to get a team to take us to Springfield, but an offer of fifteen dollars induced a liveryman to agree to take us there, about forty miles, in a day. Leaving Decatur Friday morning, November 26, we toiled through mud, water and ice to a small town within twelve miles of Springfield, arriving about dark with our team tired out and unable to proceed. A train left Springfield at 8 o'clock the following morning. An offer of fifteen dollars more induced a man to take us there in time for the train or else forfeit the money. We started at 2 o'clock in the morning. It was very cold. Ice of considerable thickness formed on the water, cutting the horses' legs badly. We arrived in Springfield twenty minutes before the train left. He earned the fifteen dollars and we had a comfortable journey to St. Louis, where we stayed over Sunday and took a steamboat Monday morning for La Salle, continuing to Chicago by stage."

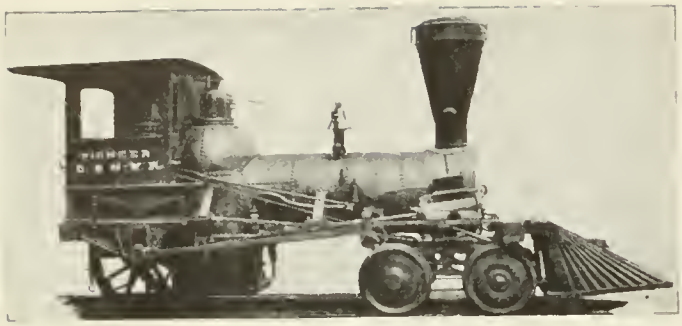
TYPICAL RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION SCENE—The building of a railroad across the sparsely settled prairies was a formidable undertaking in the early days. There were then no powerful steam shovels or track-laying machines to perform the prodigious tasks.

CHAPTER VI

Dawn of the Railway Era

THE year 1850 marked the real beginning of the railway era in Illinois. When that year opened there were about 7,400 miles of railroad in the United States, more than four-fifths of which were in states bordering on the Atlantic Ocean. Ohio had 319 miles of railroad; Michigan, 270 miles; Indiana, eighty-six miles; Kentucky, fifty-five miles; Tennessee, none; Wisconsin, none; and there was not a mile of railroad west of the Mississippi River.

In Illinois the old Northern Cross between Springfield and Meredosia was being restored as the Sangamon and Morgan Railroad, with its western terminal at Naples. Chicago, the future railway center of the continent, boasted one steam locomotive, well named the "Pioneer," which had been operated for several months over a few miles of railroad extending westward from the city. In 1850 this railroad, known as the Galena and Chicago Union (now a part of



CHICAGO'S FIRST LOCOMOTIVE—The "Pioneer" was the first locomotive to run west of Chicago. It arrived at Chicago on board a sailing vessel in the fall of 1848. By 1850 it was running as far west as Elgin. Courtesy, Chicago & North Western Railroad.

the Chicago & North Western), was completed to Elgin, forty-two miles from Chicago, and in September of that year a 10-mile branch connected this line with Aurora. Like the old Northern Cross, the Galena and Chicago Union was built of wooden rails capped with thin "straps" of iron. Over this primitive "strap-railroad" the noisy little "Pioneer" was bringing the first shipments of grain ever to reach Chicago by rail.

Of even greater significance to most of the people of Illinois was the passage by Congress, in September of that year, of an act providing for a grant of public lands to the state of Illinois to aid in the construction of the long-awaited Central Railroad.

Senators Sidney A. Breese and Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois each in turn had introduced and championed a bill in Congress for a grant of public lands to aid in the construction of the railroad. The Douglas bill, which finally passed, was for the three-fold purpose of speedily opening up the fertile but then inaccessible interior of Illinois for settlement, of increasing the value and speeding the sale of 11,500,000 acres of unoccupied public lands in Illinois, and of increasing the taxable wealth of the state. Moreover, even then the rift between the North and the South was widening, and it may be that some far-seeing statesmen recognized of what incalculable value this north-and-south railroad would be to the federal government in the event of war between the free and slave states.

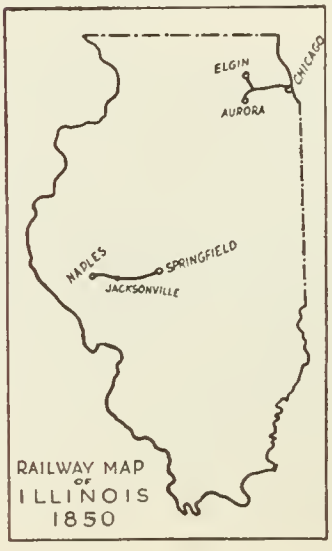
Prominent among those who supported the Douglas land grant bill in Congress were Senators Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Thomas H. Benton, Lewis Cass, Jefferson Davis, James Shields, William R. King, William H. Seward and Sam Houston, and Representatives William H. Bissell, John A. McClernand, John Wentworth and Alexander M. Stephens.

The act, as signed by President Millard Fillmore on September 20, 1850, provided that the railroad should extend from a point at or near the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to the western terminus of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, at Peru or La Salle, with a branch line from that point to the extreme northwestern corner of the state, opposite Dubuque, Ia., and with another branch to Chicago on Lake Michigan.

The passage of the act was a triumph not only for Senator Douglas but also for the state of Illinois. It rendered certain of fulfillment the long-cherished dream of the people of Illinois of a great railroad through the sparsely settled portions of the interior.

During the next few months the Illinois Central Railroad was the paramount issue in state politics. Two major questions confronted the people of Illinois: First, should the state undertake to build and operate the railroad, or should it transfer the land-grant lands to a company financed by private capital? Second, if not built by the state, which of three groups seeking the charter should be intrusted with the undertaking?

The citizens had not forgotten the disastrous results of the internal improvement scheme of 1837. At that moment the state was burdened with a debt of nearly $17,000,000, of which more than $3,000,000 was overdue interest. The state was in bad repute among investors due to its failure to meet interest obligations when they fell due, and, until it redeemed its reputation and credit, it could not hope to borrow additional millions to finance such a stupendous project as the proposed Central Railroad, "especially as the line was to run through undeveloped territory where there was no likelihood of immediate profit from traffic."



Of the three groups of promoters which sought to obtain a charter, the one finally

selected by the Illinois legislature to carry out the great undertaking was composed of outstanding business leaders of New York and New England. They included David A. Neal, Boston shipowner and president of the Eastern Railroad of Massachusetts; Robert Schuyler, probably the foremost railway man of his day and president of the New York & New Haven Railroad; Franklin Haven, head of the largest banking house in New England; John F. A. Sanford, noted fur trader and Indian agent; Jonathan Sturges, prominent New York coffee importer; Morris Ketchum, pioneer locomotive manufacturer; Gouverneur Morris, pioneer railway promoter; George Griswold, merchantman and importer; Thomas W. Ludlow, American agent of the Dutch banking house of Crommelin; William H. Aspinwall, president of the Panama Railroad and founder of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, and Robert Rantoul, Massachusetts statesman and successor to Daniel Webster in the United States Senate.

To this distinguished group of petitioners the Illinois legislature granted on February 10, 1851, the charter of the Illinois Central Railroad Company, with authority to build and operate a railroad 705 miles in length—more than twice the length of the longest railroad then existing in America.

The 2,595,000 acres of public lands which the federal government had granted to the state of Illinois were transferred to the railway company, but not without several provisions which would assure substantial and permanent benefits to both the state and the federal government. Among the provisions were:

1. That the railroad should be completed within a period of six years;
2. That the railway lands should not be offered for sale until the federal government had disposed of all of its lands within a distance of six miles of the railroad at double the former price.
3. That the railway company would pay into the state treasury 7 cents out of every dollar received for the transportation of passengers, freight, express and mails.
4. That the railroad would transport United States troops and property at one-half of standard passenger and freight rates.
5. That the railroad would transport United States mails at 20 per cent less than standard rates.

As we shall see later, the railroad, through these provisions, has paid dearly for the lands which it received.

Within a few months from the time the charter was granted, the Illinois Central Railroad Company had a large force of engineers in the field. On December 23, 1851, ground was broken at Chicago and Cairo, and the construction of what was destined to become the principal railway system in Illinois was definitely under way. Within a few months the road was under construction at several points, and thousands of laborers were arriving in Illinois to aid in the undertaking.

Although the population of the state was then in the neighborhood of 900,000, the majority of these settlers were located in counties bordering on the Mississippi, Wabash and Illinois rivers, Lake Michigan and the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The prairie country was still but sparsely settled.

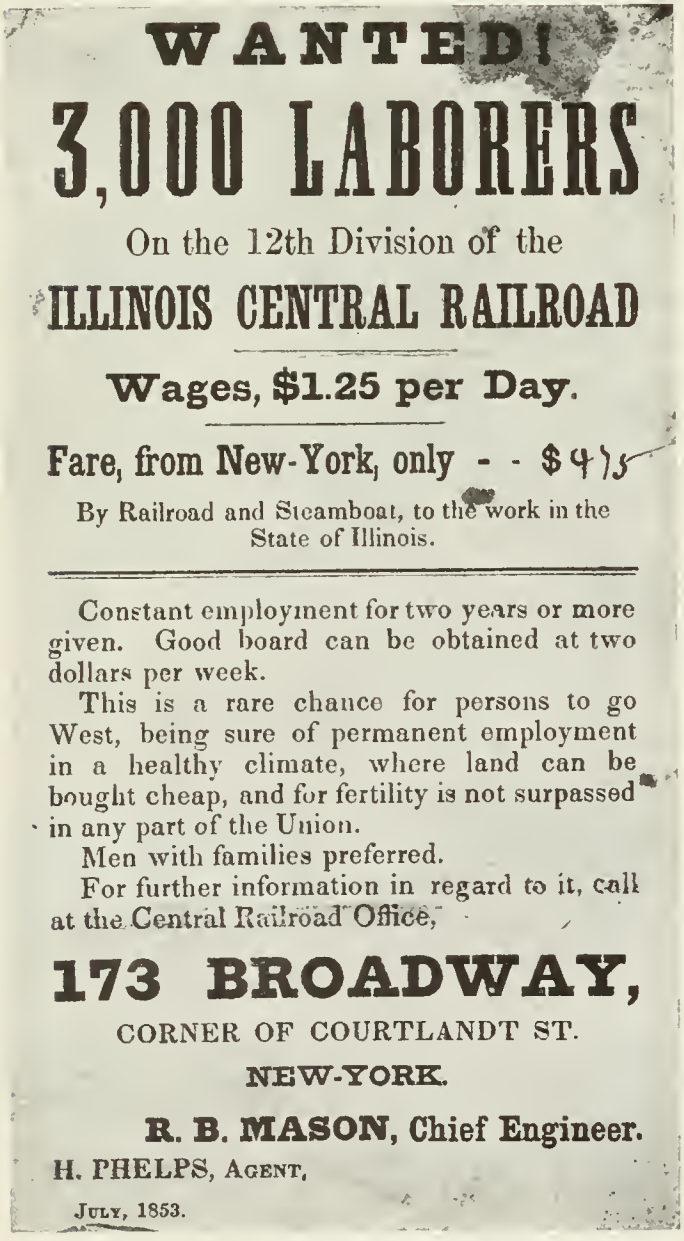
The 366-mile route of the Illinois Central Railroad between Chicago and Cairo did not pass through a single settlement of more than 100 inhabitants, and it passed *near* only three settlements of any importance—Bourbonnais, on the Kankakee River, with 1,710 inhabitants; Urbana, in Champaign County, with 210 inhabitants, and Jonesboro, in Union County, with 584 inhabitants.

From the junction of the Chicago branch, near the present city of Centralia, to Galena, the

DOUGLAS AND BREESE—Senators Stephen A. Douglas (left) and Sidney Breese championed the Illinois land-grant measures which led to the building of the Illinois Central Railroad. Douglas photo by courtesy of Chicago Historical Society.

324-mile route encountered only eight towns or villages of more than 100 inhabitants; Vandalia, the old state capital, with 360 inhabitants; Decatur, with 600; Bloomington, with 1,594; Clinton, with 367; La Salle, with 200; Amboy, with 540; Dixon, with 540; and Freeport, with 1,436 inhabitants. Aside from these few small towns the route traversed a wild and desolate region, over which deer and wild game roamed without molestation and one might travel for a whole day without coming in sight of a human habitation.

The building of a pioneer railroad across the prairies of Illinois was a formidable undertaking for that early day. Many and difficult were the problems confronting the builders. There were then no powerful machines to reduce the hills and level the valleys and swing the heavy timbers into place. The work had to be done by men of brawn, with shovels and picks and sledge hammers and crow bars.



WANTED!

3,000 LABORERS

On the 12th Division of the

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RAILROAD

Wages, $1.25 per Day.

Fare, from New-York, only - - $9 75

By Railroad and Steamboat, to the work in the State of Illinois.

Constant employment for two years or more given. Good board can be obtained at two dollars per week.

This is a rare chance for persons to go West, being sure of permanent employment in a healthy climate, where land can be bought cheap, and for fertility is not surpassed in any part of the Union.

Men with families preferred.

For further information in regard to it, call at the Central Railroad Office,

173 BROADWAY,

CORNER OF COURTLANDT ST.

NEW-YORK.

R. B. MASON, Chief Engineer.

H. PHELPS, Agent,

July, 1853.

Advertisement for Laborers—The Illinois Central recruited thousands of workmen in Eastern and Southern cities and brought them to Illinois to work on the railroad. As many as 10,000 men were engaged at one time on the project.

Crews of "lumber jacks" were sent into the forests of Michigan, Wisconsin and southern Illinois to produce the cross ties and bridge timbers. Quarries were opened to supply the stone for the bridge and building foundations. Hundreds of ox- and horse-teams were employed to transport rail, ties, lumber, stone and provisions for many miles over miserable roads or across open prairies to the construction sites. Other hundreds of teams were used to move the earth from cuts and side borrows to embankments.

Iron rails were purchased in England and shipped across the Atlantic in sailing vessels, thence from Eastern ports to Illinois by way of the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes, or from New Orleans by the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. One vessel laden with rails for the Illinois Central foundered in a storm in mid-Atlantic.

Laborers were recruited in New York, Boston, New Orleans and other distant cities—hardy Irishmen, thrifty Scots, industrious Germans and Scandinavians, many fresh from the old countries. One contractor brought 1,000 men direct from Ireland. The railway company, with an eye to settling up its territory, gave preference to men with families. Arriving in Illinois, by rail, lake or river, these men were sent overland in prairie wagons to the numerous construction camps along the route. At times as many as 10,000 workmen were employed on the construction. It is estimated that within a period of five years at least 100,000 men were brought to Illinois to work on the railroad. Workmen were paid in cash, and the paymasters were obliged to make their way from camp to camp under heavy armed guards.

In those days Illinois was not as healthful as it is now, and the prevalence of cholera during the summer months created much unrest, "scattering the workmen like frightened sheep." Men at work one day were in their graves the next. Many panic-stricken workmen abandoned the camps at the first signs of the

EARLY OFFICERS—Col. Roswell B. Mason (left), chief engineer of construction, under whose direction the original lines of the Illinois Central Railroad were built, and Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks, resident director of the railroad prior to the Civil War. Banks portrait from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, March, 1865, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

epidemic. Hundreds died at Chicago, Central City, Cairo and other points. The prevalence of fever and ague and the fact that it was dangerous during the summer months to eat either beef or butter or to drink milk because of the dread "milk sickness" alarmed the workmen and added to the difficulties of the builders.

At many points, especially on the Chicago branch, there was much difficulty in obtaining good water.

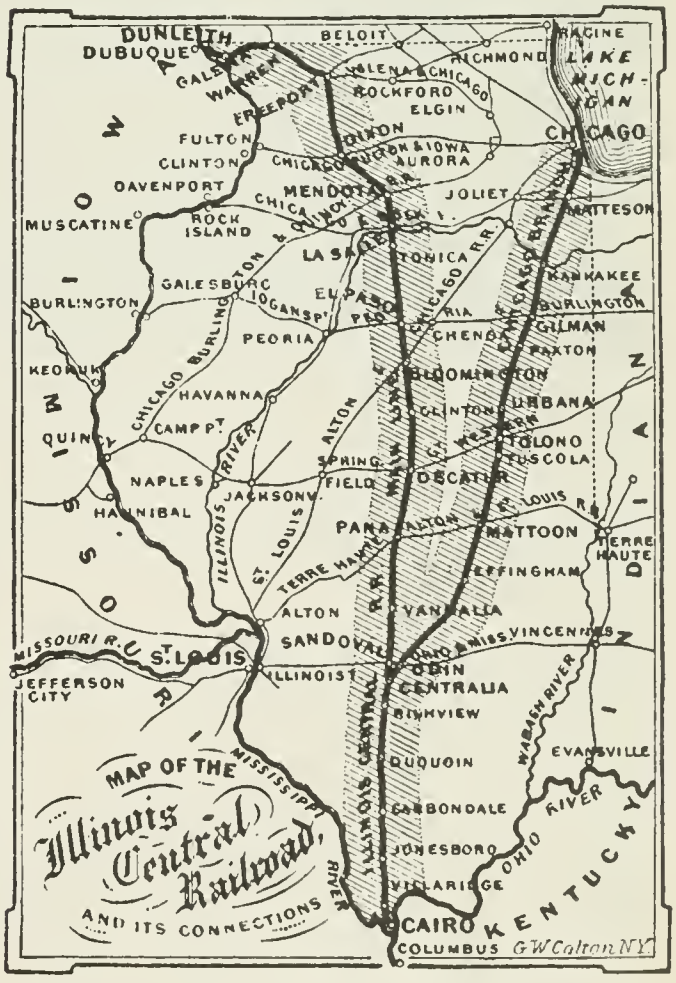
Notwithstanding these handicaps, the work proceeded at an astonishing pace. On May 20, 1852, the first completed section of the road between Chicago and Kensington was opened. On May 16, 1853, the road was opened between La Salle and Bloomington, and on July 11 of that year the rails of the Chicago branch reached the Kankakee River. On November 14 the line was opened from La Salle to Mendota. In 1854 the following sections were opened: Freeport-Nora, January 6; Bloomington-Clinton, March 14; Kankakee-Ludlow, May 13; Ludlow-Champaign, July 24; Nora-Apple River, September 11; Clinton-Decatur, October 18; Apple River-Galena, October 28; Cairo-Sandoval, November 22; Mendota-Amboy, November 27.

On January 6, 1855, the line between Sandoval and Decatur was completed, and on January 15 the Amboy-Freeport line was opened, providing a continuous railroad from Galena to Cairo. On June 11 the rails reached the Mississippi River opposite Dubuque, and on June 25 the section between Champaign and Mattoon was opened.

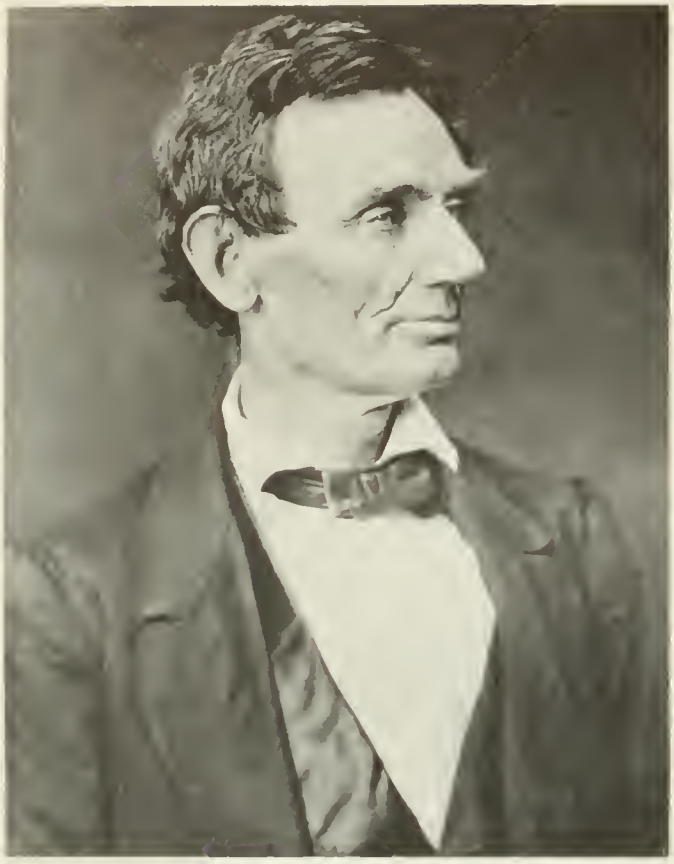
The joy with which the early settlers hailed the coming of the "Iron Horse" knew no bounds. It brought an end, once and for all, to the isolation they had experienced on the lonely prairies. It brought the merchandise and the markets of the world to their doors. It put an end to the long and difficult journeys to distant markets. It enhanced the value of their lands. It brought new neighbors, new comforts, new interests, new opportunities.

The pioneer children, no less than their parents, eagerly watched the progress of the engineers and builders and plied them endlessly with questions about the speed of the trains, the size of the engines and cars, the cost of travel, and so on.

The arrival of the first train was the signal for an enthusiastic celebration in the towns, with speech-making, music, a parade and a bar-



A MAP OF 1861, showing the original lines of the Illinois Central Railroad, completed in 1856.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN was an attorney of the Illinois Central Railroad for several years prior to his nomination for the Presidency. Picture by courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society.

becue or picnic on the program. The festivities sometimes lasted throughout the day and evening.

Sun-browned settlers rode for miles, in ox-carts and prairie wagons and on horseback—men in snuff-colored jeans and high-boots, women in calico dresses and big sun-bonnets, and children in their "best bib and tucker"—to witness for the first time in the lives of most of them a steam locomotive and a train of cars bowling along at the terrific speed of fifteen or twenty miles an hour!

A passenger who rode the first train through southern Illinois said that people lined the track on either side and as the train passed they "stood dumb with amazement, as if they had just come out between the shakes of fever and ague."

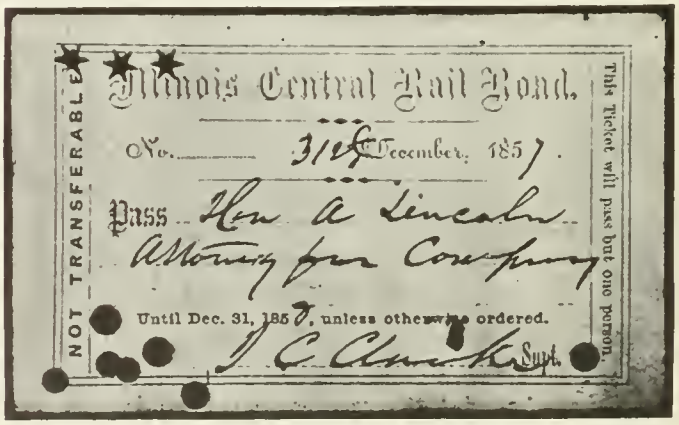
The last rail in the construction of the original lines of the Illinois Central Railroad was spiked into place near Mason, Ill., on September 27, 1856—only five years and eight months after the railway company had received its charter—signalizing the completion of the longest railroad on the American continent at that time.

From its inception the Illinois Central had attracted the interest of investors both in this country and abroad. At the time the company was organized there were no banks doing business in Illinois, and there were no capitalists of consequence in this whole western country.

Most of the funds used in building the road came from European and Eastern investors, the majority of whom were persons of moderate means. Besides the incorporators, these investors included Richard Cobden, British statesman, for whom Cobden, Ill., was named; William Gladstone, the great British premier; Lawrence Heyworth, member of parliament, for whom Heyworth, Ill., was named; Sir Joseph Paxton, for whom Paxton, Ill., was named; James C. Fargo, of the famous Wells-Fargo express company; Abram S. Hewitt, son-in-law of Peter Cooper, builder of the locomotive "Tom Thumb"; Wendell Phillips, noted abolitionist; Harriett Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and many other persons of prominence.

The unusual importance of the Illinois Central project naturally attracted the services of many persons of outstanding attainments. The chief engineer of construction was Col. Roswell B. Mason, a canal and railway builder of wide renown. Col. William H. Bissell, hero of the Mexican War and eleventh governor of Illinois, was one of its early officers.

Gen. George B. McClellan, of Civil War fame, was chief engineer and operating vice-president of the Illinois Central in the late 1850s. Gen. Ambrose E. Burnside and Gen.



LINCOLN'S ILLINOIS CENTRAL PASS—The future War President made frequent trips over the Illinois Central Railroad, sometimes on business of the company, sometimes on speech-making tours.

Nathaniel P. Banks, Civil War commanders, were treasurer and resident director, respectively, in the period prior to the war. Gen. Grenville M. Dodge, builder of the first railroad across the Rocky Mountains, Sir William C. Van Horne, builder of Canada's first transcontinental railroad, and Marvin Hughitt, whose name will forever be identified with the development of the Chicago & North Western railway system, began their railway careers with the Illinois Central in the early days.

By a unique provision of the railroad's charter, every governor of Illinois since the days of Augustus French has been a member of the board of directors of the Illinois Central. This was probably a wise provision, because the Illinois Central has for more than eighty years been one of the foremost factors in Illinois, outranking every other railroad and probably every other private enterprise in the state in investments, employment, payrolls and taxes.

Abraham Lincoln was an attorney for the Illinois Central for several years, representing the railroad in the circuit courts of Champaign, Macon, DeWitt, McLean, Shelby and Vermillion counties on the old Eighth Judicial Circuit, as well as before the Supreme Court of Illinois. The famous McLean County Tax Case, in which he represented the Illinois Central, was probably the most important law case of his career. In 1859, Lincoln, as an Illinois Central attorney, was host to a group of state officers and prominent citizens on a complete tour of the Illinois Central Railroad lasting several days for the purpose of appraising the railway property.

CHAPTER VII

Illinois Is Transformed

WHILE the Illinois Central Railroad was under construction Illinois was undergoing a transformation such as few other regions of the world ever experienced. The railroad ushered in a new era in Illinois. The great project itself, by its magnitude, attracted widespread attention. Thousands of industrious engineers, mechanics and laborers came to Illinois to work on the railroad, later to purchase farms, enter business and become substantial citizens, the grandfathers of many present-day Illinoisans.

In order to promote the development of its territory, so essential to its success, the Illinois Central launched a widespread publicity campaign—the first important publicity campaign ever undertaken by an American railroad—for the purpose of drawing attention to the climate, resources and opportunities of this then "far western country."

The advertising columns of many newspapers, farm journals and magazines were used in the effort. Thus, into tens of thousands of homes in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, the Southland, as well as in England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Sweden and Norway, went these Illinois Central advertisements, carrying illustrations of luxurious crops of grain, shocks of wheat, baskets brimming with corn, vegetables piled high, and with horses and cattle grazing on the fertile prairies —a scene of peace and plenty, beckoning the hardy sons of toil to "Illinois, the Garden State of America."

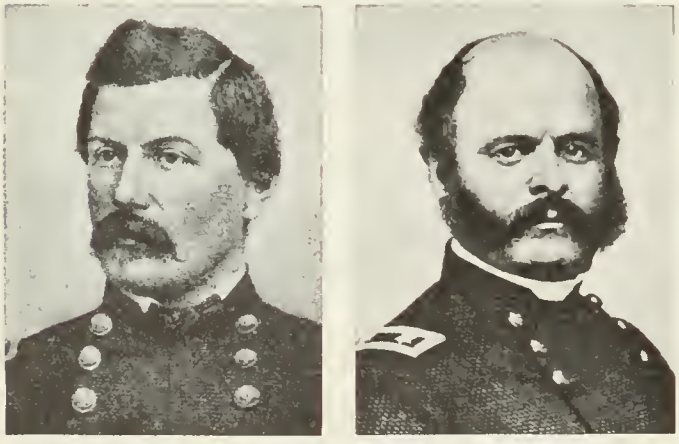
THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL'S NO. 1—The arrival of this old "woodburner," signalizing the opening of the railroad, was celebrated in many towns up and down the Illinois Central in the 1850s.

"The Finest Farm Lands—Equal to Any in the World!!!" ran one of the advertisements that attracted thousands to Illinois in the 1850s and 1860s. "The Illinois Central Railroad Company offers, on long credit, the beautiful and fertile prairie lands lying along the whole line of railroad, 700 miles in length, upon the most favorable terms for enabling farmers, manufacturers, mechanics and workingmen to make for themselves and their families a competency and a home they can call their own.

"No state in the Valley of the Mississippi offers so great an inducement to the settlers as Illinois. . . . There is no part of the world where all the conditions of climate and soil so admirably combine to produce corn and wheat. In central and southern Illinois uncommon advantages are presented for stock raising. The great resources of the state, in coal, iron, lead, zinc, limestone, sandstone, etc., are almost untouched; they await the arrival of enterprising and energetic men. . . . Mechanics and working-men will find a free-school system encouraged by the state. . . . Children can live in sight of the school, the college, the church, and grow up with the prosperity of the leading state in the Great Western Empire."

The railroad supplemented its newspaper and magazine advertising with hundreds of thousands of illustrated pamphlets, as well as large numbers of posters and handbills, telling of the opportunities which Illinois offered the homeseeker. Colonization agents were located in Eastern cities and at the seaports. Representatives of the railroad toured Europe, delivering lectures on the opportunities which Illinois offered the immigrant and colonist.

In his book *The Illinois Central Railroad and Its Colonization Work,* Dr. Paul Wallace Gates says that in two months one Illinois Central agent distributed 26,000 land pamphlets in Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut. Another agent distributed 300,000 pamphlets to newspaper subscribers in Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia and western Pennsylvania. Eight thousand pamphlets were sent to subscribers of the *Maine Farmer.* Thousands of copies were published in foreign languages for distribution in Europe. Large numbers were sent out from the Chicago office of the Illinois Central in response to inquiries which poured in by mail.



McClellan and Burnside—These distinguished Civil War commanders, George B. McClellan (left) and Ambrose E. Burnside, were officers of the Illinois Central Railroad prior to the Civil War. Courtesy, Chicago Historical Society.

Indeed, so extensive and widespread were the railroad's efforts to attract settlers that nearly every person in the United States and millions in foreign countries must have read or heard a great deal about Illinois and its varied opportunities.

How many thousands of persons migrated to Illinois as a result of the construction of the Illinois Central and of the widespread publicity campaign which the railway company carried on, no one will ever know, but unquestionably the number was very large. Hardly was the construction of the railroad well under way before a tide of migration of unprecedented proportions set in toward Illinois.

Under the provisions of the federal grant, the Illinois Central could not offer any of its lands for sale until all government lands, in alternate sections, within six miles of the railroad had been sold. In 1850 the government owned 11,500,000 acres of wild land in Illinois, which had been offered to the public for twenty years, without purchasers, at $1.25 per acre. Holders of government war script could purchase these lands for 62½ cents an acre.

Following the passage of the land-grant bill, the government withdrew from the market all lands within six miles of the proposed railroad. When again put on the market, in the fall of 1852, they were offered and quickly sold at $2.50 an acre, or for two to four times the prices which no one was willing to pay before the railroad was assured.

Thus the government lost nothing by the transfer of the lands to Illinois in return for the assurance that a railroad would be built through these vast areas of wild lands in the interior of the state. On the contrary, the government profited by the ready sale at increased prices of the millions of acres which it retained—lands which, without the railroad, would have been reduced to 12½ cents an acre under the Graduation Act of 1854.

When the Illinois Central lands were placed on the market in the summer of 1854, the land

An Early Illinois Central Train

office at Chicago was besieged by applicants eager to take advantage of the railroad's low prices and liberal credit terms under which some of the richest farm lands in Illinois could be purchased for a down payment of only 50 cents an acre, with seven years in which to pay the remainder.

By this time the railroads had reached Chicago from the East. Every incoming train brought its quota of homeseekers; others were arriving by lake steamer or covered wagons, to tarry a day or two in Chicago and then press on to contribute their bit to the making of Illinois.

Over the old National Road and other pikes from the East the white tops of prairie schooners, slowly wending their way westward, ever westward, met the eye of the arriving settler as the "Iron Horse" bore him across the prairies to his new home to be.

Where but a short time ago spread a desolate, unpeopled waste, the newcomer now beheld many evidences of human enterprise. Around nearly every little wooden railway station streets were being laid out; houses, stores, schools and churches were being erected. The sound of saw and hammer and the fragrance of spruce lumber were in the air.

Here and there and everywhere across the prairies farm houses were springing up; fences were being built; trees and hedges were being planted; cattle and sheep were grazing; fields of grain were yellowing in the summer sun.

Not to be outdone in enterprise by his new neighbors, the old settler on the edge of the grove was erecting a frame dwelling to replace the crude little log cabin which he had built years ago, before the railroads brought sawed lumber and other building materials to the prairies.

On every hand were unmistakable evidences of the transforming, energizing influence of railroads, which were now being flung across the state and beyond its borders, into Iowa and Missouri and Wisconsin, pushing back the frontier and laying the foundations for agricultural and industrial development such as the Illinois Central was bringing to its territory in Illinois.

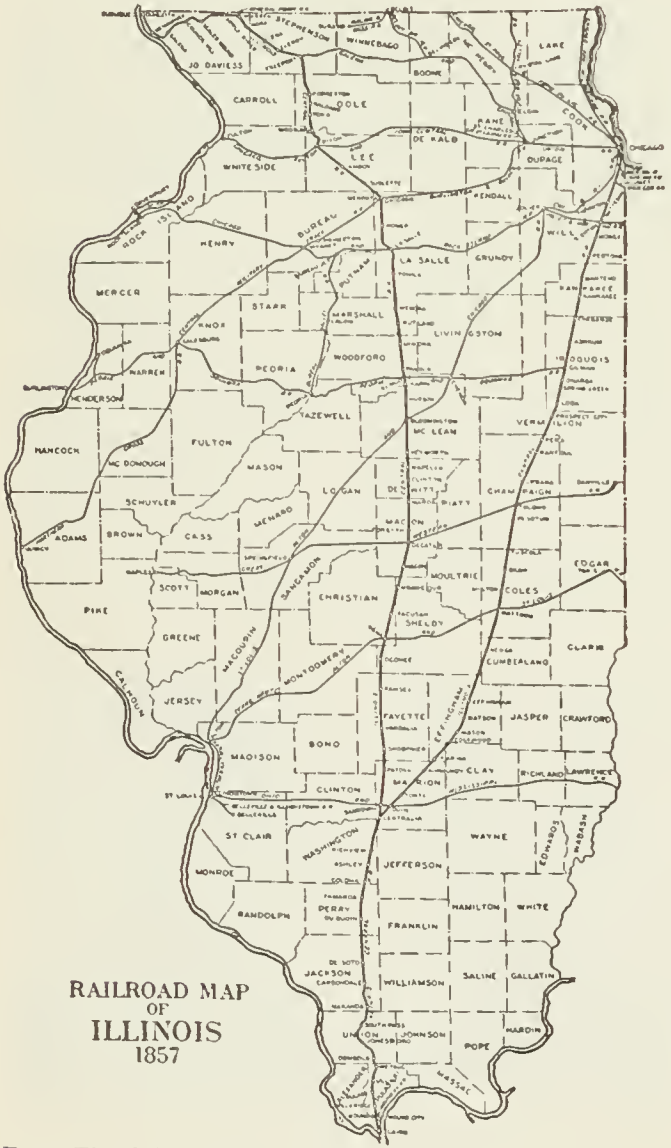
Wherever the "civilizing rails" went they brought the settler, the investor, the merchant, the mechanic, the promoter, the teacher, the preacher, to establish farming communities, villages, towns.

Assured of reliable transportation service, month after month, year after year, summer and winter, the manufacturer and the mine operator came to add their substantial influence to the building of new communities. Thus not only were new and nearby consuming centers created for the products of the farm, but cheap railway transportation enabled the Illinois farmer to ship his products to consuming centers hundreds of miles distant. Flourishing trade currents were thus set up on every hand, and Illinois entered upon an era of progress and prosperity hitherto unknown.

Numerous villages and towns sprang up like

magic along the routes of the "Iron Horse." Centralia was typical. An unredeemed prairie at the beginning of 1854; a railway station in midsummer; a few months later a fast-growing town of 1,900 inhabitants, with 275 dwellings, eleven stores, three hotels, two churches, a railway repair shop, a flour mill and a school. Two hundred and twenty-five farms were opened in the vicinity within two years.

At Champaign the Illinois Central established a station on the open prairie in the summer of 1854. Within a few months a flourishing village had sprung up. A year later Champaign was a community of 100 houses and four or five hundred inhabitants. Settlers were swarming in to take up the vacant lands in the surrounding country.



From *The Colonization Activities of the Illinois Central Railroad*, by Dr. Paul Wallace Gates, copyright 1934, reproduced by courtesy of Harvard University Press.

In 1850 there were only 23,000 acres of improved land in Champaign county; by 1860 improved acreage had increased to 170,000 acres. The growth continued until in 1950 there were 604,900 acres of improved land in the county. When the railroad was opened there were no manufacturing plants in Champaign County. In 1948 there were about 171 manufacturing plants in the county, and their output in that year was valued at nearly $100,525,000

When the railroad was surveyed Carbondale was not on the map. When the railroad was opened it was a thriving village of 300 inhabitants. In another five years its population had quadrupled.

Mattoon sprang up almost overnight. In April, 1855, there was not a sign of human life; by August there was a large hotel, with another in process of erection, a postoffice, a dry goods store and two groceries to supply the rapidly increasing population. By 1856 Mattoon was a village of 500 inhabitants, with 113 homes completed and others going up on every hand.

When the Illinois Central was projected in 1850 the value of all farm property in McLean County was only $1,665,000. Seven out of every eight acres of land in the county were in a wild state. In 1950 McLean was the richest agricultural county in the Middle West, with farm property valued at $204,500,000, or over 123 times what it was before the Illinois Central was built.

In a single decade, from 1850 to 1860, the population of Illinois more than doubled. That of the thirty-two counties traversed by the Illinois Central Railroad mounted from 248,000 to 609,000, a gain of 145 per cent. In 1950 the population of these counties was approximately 5,500,000— twenty times that of 1850.

Still more striking was the agricultural and industrial growth of Illinois as a result of railway development. In 1850 only 5,036,000 acres, or 14 per cent of the land area of Illinois, were classed as improved. Ten years later 13,196,000 acres, or 37 per cent of Illinois' area, were improved. The census of 1950 reports 30,900,000 acres, or 86 per cent of the state's area, as improved farm lands.

The development of manufactures is another striking phase of progress. In 1850 the total

THE EXPRESS TRAIN—A Currier and Ives print of 1859, reproduced by courtesy of the American Steel Foundries.

value of manufactured products in the thirty-two counties traversed by the Illinois Central amounted to only $6,247,000. In 1948 the value of manufactured products in the city of Decatur alone was more than twenty-two times that sum!

In 1850, aside from the lead mines near Galena and two or three small coal mines in the vicinity of East St. Louis, the vast mineral resources of Illinois were almost wholly untouched. Railway transportation, providing direct year-round service from the mines and quarries to every market in the country, enabled these hidden reservoirs of wealth to be developed. As a result, Illinois' income from mineral production was a hundred times greater in recent years.

The growth of the great coal-mining industry of southern Illinois was coincident with the development of the Illinois Central Railroad. The first shaft mine was opened at DuQuoin a few months after the railroad was completed through that part of the state.

The only locomotives then operating in Illinois burned cord-wood. In 1855 the Illinois Central began experimenting in the use of Illinois coal for locomotive fuel. Some were skeptical; they did not believe it could be done. One railway man declared that attempts to burn Illinois coal in locomotives were irrational and absurd; that it couldn't be done.

But within a few months from the time his letter was written the experiments were pronounced a success, and in 1856 the company placed orders for several coal-burning locomotives. By 1859 twenty-two of the railroad's 112 engines were burning Illinois coal. At the close of the Civil War practically every locomotive on the Illinois Central was burning Illinois coal exclusively.

Under the stimulus of railway development and the tremendous industrial expansion which followed, coal production in Illinois mounted from 400,000 tons in 1855, to 6,000,000 tons in 1880 and to 25,800,000 tons in 1900, with the Illinois Central ranking throughout this period as the leading consumer of coal in the state.

CHAPTER VIII

A Great Railway Center

"CHICAGO," said Charles H. Markham, "is a majestic monument to railway enterprise and achievement—a mighty tribute to the faith and courage of the empire builders whose genius and daring brought the great American railway system into being."

Nowhere in Illinois—or in the world, for that matter—are the benefits of railway development more strikingly in evidence than in this great mid-western metropolis—the transporta-

tion center of the North American continent.

When the first Chicago railroad was proposed, in 1831, Chicago was "a mere collection of huts in a swamp." By the time the second railroad was proposed, in 1834, it was a flourishing village. Chicago continued to grow under the stimulus of these "paper" railroads and the promise of prosperity which they and the proposed canal were expected to bring.

By 1850, when the Illinois Central Railroad, with a "branch line" to Chicago, was first definitely assured, and the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad and the Aurora Branch were opened to Elgin and Aurora, Chicago had attained a population of 29,000. These pioneer projects brought Chicago into prominence as a railway center and stamped it at once as the coming city of the West.

"On to Chicago!" was the new slogan that resounded through the land. "On to Chicago!" said John Murray Forbes, of Boston, and straightway the Michigan Central Railroad, which then ran from Detroit to Michigan City, Ind., began its extension around the lake to Chicago "On to Chicago!" said John B. Jervis, of the Michigan Southern & Northern Indiana Railroad, and promptly that road was engaged in a spirited race with Forbes' road to see which should have the distinction of being the first to reach Illinois and Chicago from the East.

The Northern Indiana Railroad won the race, reaching the city on February 20, 1852. The Michigan Central entered the city over the Illinois Central tracks three months later. Both roads now belong to the New York Central System.

In the meantime other railway companies were being organized to push lines into the undeveloped territory westward and northward from Chicago.

Late in 1852 the Chicago & Rock Island Railroad was opened to Joliet; the following year it was extended to a junction with the Illinois Central at La Salle; in 1854 it reached the Mississippi River at Rock Island. This was the first railroad to link Chicago and the rail lines from the East with the Mississippi River. It was also the first railroad to cross the Mississippi River on a bridge, which was opened to Davenport, Ia., in April, 1856.

The Galena and Chicago Union reached Freeport in the summer of 1853, and two years later, by using the tracks of the Illinois Central west of Freeport, its trains were running from Chicago to the Mississippi River opposite Dubuque. Late in 1855 the Galena and Chicago Union completed a line of its own through DeKalb, Dixon and Sterling to the Mississippi River at Fulton—now the main line of the Chicago & North Western to Omaha.

Chicago in 1853—The Illinois Central originally entered the city on a trestle in the lake. This location was designated by the city council in order to relieve the city of the heavy expense of protecting the shore line against lake storms. The railroad built a breakwater at a cost to itself, and a saving to the city, of millions of dollars.

In 1853 the Central Military Tract Railroad was opened from Aurora to Mendota, thus providing in conjunction with the Aurora Branch (Chicago and Aurora) and the Illinois Central a through rail route between Chicago and Bloomington. It was over this route that the first passenger train between Chicago and Cairo was run on January 8, 1855, before the Chicago branch of the Illinois Central was completed.

The Military Tract road was completed as far west as Galesburg in 1854, and in the following year the Peoria and Oquakwa Railroad between Galesburg and the Mississippi River, opposite Burlington, Ia., was opened. Shortly thereafter the Chicago and Aurora, the Central Military Tract and the Peoria and Oquakwa, forming a through rail route between Chicago and the Mississippi River opposite Burlington, were consolidated as the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. The present Burlington line between Galesburg and Quincy was also one of the pioneer railway lines of Illinois, having been built in 1854-55 under the old Northern Cross charter.

The present Chicago & North Western lines between Chicago and Milwaukee and between Chicago and Madison, Wis., were opened in 1855.

In the fall of 1852 the Chicago and Mississippi Railroad, later the Chicago & Alton, was opened between Alton and Springfield. Two years later it was completed to Joliet. The completion of the Joliet and Chicago Railroad in 1856 provided a through rail route from Chicago to the Mississippi River at Alton. Meanwhile several other important railway projects were in progress. A compilation published in Gerhard's *Illinois As It Is* in 1857 lists forty-eight railway projects then completed or under construction in Illinois or coming from adjoining states. Seven of these roads were then actually in Chicago and several others were projected to terminate at Chicago.

GEORGE M. PULLMAN — Probably no man contributed more to the comforts of passenger travel. The company which he founded has long been the largest manufacturer and operator of sleeping cars in the world.

ILLINOIS CENTRAL TERMINAL, CHICAGO, 1859—The grain trade of Chicago was facilitated by these huge elevators, erected by the railroad. From *Harper's Weekly*, September 10, 1859, by courtesy of *Harper's Magazine*.

During this period of feverish railway expansion, Chicago was a beehive of activity, growing by leaps and bounds. The following extracts from a letter written by an Illinois Central official in 1855 vividly portrays the scene:

"The census of 1850 gave Chicago 28,620. The papers of the city are glorying over the results of a census just taken which gives our city 80,023 inhabitants on September 1, 1855. Mr. Neal remarks 'this is the most astonishing thing that ever happened in the world.' There are 2,700 new buildings now going up. . . . Mr. Edgar was astonished, as every one is, at the magnitude and growth of the city. . . . On all hands I hear that more extensive preparations than for any previous year are now being made to build and improve over the whole city. . . . Hotels, depots, grain houses, store blocks, private dwellings, not to mention several churches and a theater, are to be erected in almost every division of the city.

"In eight blocks bounded by the Chicago River, the Illinois Central Railroad, Clark Street and Randolph Street, thirteen five-story brick warehouses are in course of construction; also nine five-story stone and brick warehouses and fifteen four-story common brick warehouses, one stone hotel six stories high and forty tenements. The Illinois Central is putting up a beautiful structure for office purposes. . . . These improvements are within that portion of the city nearest the station of the Illinois Central and are more extensive than those going up in other parts, but they are a fair measure of the progress of the town. . . . I wonder if there is or was ever anything like it!"

Pioneer Sleeping Car—The introduction of sleeping cars on the Illinois Central in 1856 marked a great forward step in passenger travel. The *Amboy*, shown above, was in use in 1857.

Chicago, which in 1850 had fewer than 29,000 souls and only one partly completed railroad, had become by 1860 a city of 109,000 souls with eleven important railroads! It was now the undisputed railway and distributing center of the West.

Large quantities of railway construction materials and manufactured goods were being shipped in by rail and boat for redistribution to the North and West and South. As the railroads opened up these fertile regions, increasing quantities of grains and livestock were shipped to Chicago by rail for transshipment by lake or rail to the Eastern states.

To take care of the growing grain traffic, large grain elevators were erected by the Illinois Central and other railroads, as well as by private interests. Railway transportation soon made Chicago the world's largest grain market.

In order to promote the livestock trade and to bring together the buyers, sellers, manufacturers and transporting agencies, the Illinois Central and other railroads were chiefly instrumental in organizing the Union Stock Yards and Transit Company, which greatly increased Chicago's importance as a livestock market and meat-packing center and led to the development of the great meat packing houses whose names are now household words throughout the world.

Chicago's importance as a railway center also attracted steel and car manufacturers and others engaged in supplying the railroads with equipment, materials and supplies. One of these firms was the Pullman Palace Car Company, now The Pullman Company, which has for many years been the largest manufacturer and operator of sleeping cars in the world. The Pullman Company and other railway equipment and railway supply companies have been highly important factors in the making of Chicago.

Chicago's superior transportation facilities also led to the establishment of the great mail order and wholesale houses which have contributed so much to the city's growth and prestige as a merchandising center.

Thus, hand in hand with railway development, the industrial development and commercial growth of this great mid-Western metropolis have gone forward.

Chicago's present-day importance is in large measure due to the fact that it is the focal center of the greatest network of railroads in the world. In order to understand the importance of Chicago as a transportation center, one's view must comprehend the entire railway system of the United States, because the railway lines which terminate at Chicago are but the delivering and receiving ends of many of the busy arteries of commerce that reach out—like the spokes of a wheel—to the far corners of the land.

The thirty-odd railway lines which radiate from the Chicago district belong to railway systems which embrace more than two-fifths of the total railway mileage of the United States. These systems own more than one-half of all the locomotives and cars and they perform more than one-half of all the railway freight, passenger, express and mail service in the country.

In the Chicago terminal district alone there are about 8,000 miles of railway trackage—enough to form twenty railroads abreast reaching the length of the state from the Wisconsin line to Cairo. Between three and four thousand

passenger and freight trains enter or leave Chicago every day. In a recent year a passenger train arrived or departed at Chicago every fifty-eight seconds and a freight train arrived or departed every thirty-six seconds, on the average, day and night.

The railroads have been a dominant factor in Chicago's growth and prosperity from the beginning of the railway era down to the present day, surpassing in wage earners and wages any other single industry in the Chicago industrial area and performing a transportation service of tremendous proportions, vital to the welfare of the city, the state and the nation.

CHAPTER IX

Growth of Railroads

WHILE the railroads were extending their first lines northward, westward and southward from Chicago in the 1850s, other railway projects were under way elsewhere in Illinois, and all Illinois was astir with railway activity.

In the summer of 1855 a broad-gauge railroad known as the Ohio and Mississippi, was completed between Illinoistown (now East St. Louis) and Vincennes, intersecting the Illinois Central at Sandoval and Odin. The entire line between St. Louis and Cincinnati, completed in 1857, was later changed to standard gauge. It is now a part of the Baltimore & Ohio System.

The old Northern Cross Railroad, which had been reorganized in the late 1840s as the Sangamon and Morgan, with its western terminal at Naples, was acquired by the Great Western Railway Company and extended eastward from Springfield through Decatur, Tolono

and Danville to Lafayette, Ind. This road, completed in 1856, subsequently became a part of the Wabash Railway system.

In 1856 the Terre Haute, Alton and St. Louis (now the Big Four Railroad) was opened between Terre Haute and Alton, forming connections with the Illinois Central at Mattoon and Pana. A branch line was extended to St. Louis, and over this route in the early days ran the Illinois Central's famous "Lightning Express," a Chicago-St. Louis train, equipped with "magnificent state room cars," and described as one of the finest passenger trains in the Mississippi Valley.

By 1857 Illinois was interlaced by a network of railroads—the early lines of several of the great American railway systems of the present day. Persons could travel and ship goods all the way by rail from the Eastern seaboard to Illinois and from Illinois into the newly opened regions of Wisconsin, Iowa and Missouri.

From fewer than 100 miles of short "strap" railroads in 1850, the railway mileage of Illinois mounted to 2,790 miles in 1860—more than existed in any other state in the Union except Ohio.

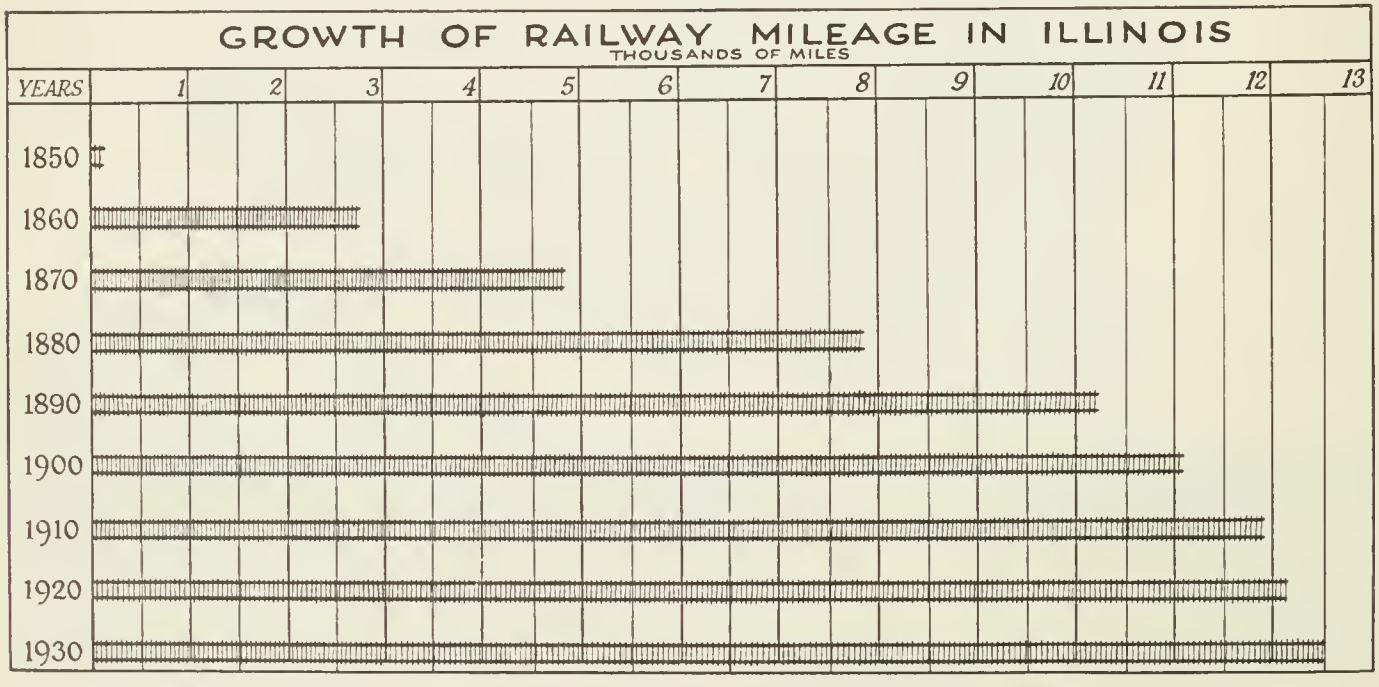
The twelve principal railroads in Illinois at that time, with their mileage and investment in the state, were as follows:

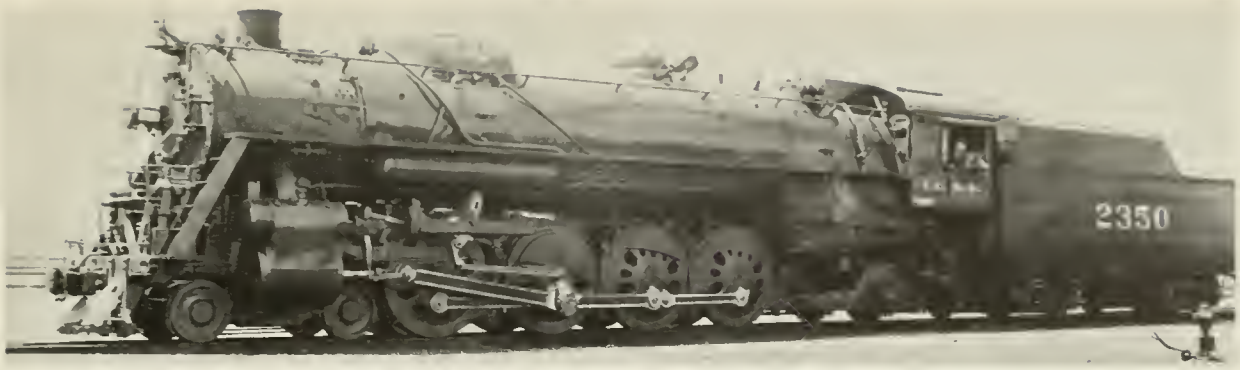
	Mileage	Investment
Illinois Central	705	$27,195,000
Galena and Chicago Union	261	9,352,000
Chicago, Alton and St. Louis	220	10,000,000
Terre Haute, Alton and St. Louis	208	$8,865,000
Great Western	182	5,086,000
Chicago and Rock Island	181	6,914,000
Logansport, Peoria and Burlington	171	5,000,000
Ohio and Mississippi	148	4,871,000
Chicago, Burlington and Quincy	138	7,469,000
Quincy and Chicago	100	1,979,000
Peoria and Oquawka	94	3,770,000
Chicago and Northwestern	66	3,311,000

Railway expansion was temporarily checked by the Civil War. During that great national emergency the railroads proved of inestimable value to the government in the speedy movement of troops, military supplies and mails. Particularly was this true of the Illinois Central, with its northern termini at Chicago and Dubuque, Ia., and its southern terminus at Cairo.

Had the Illinois Central been designed and built solely for military service, it probably could not have been better suited to the needs of the government in coping with the grave situation with which it was confronted. No one knew this better than President Lincoln and General McClellan, who had been in the service of the railroad in the years preceding the war, or than General Grant, whose home was on the Illinois Central at Galena.

As the only direct rail route from Chicago and the upper Mississippi Valley region to the Ohio River, the Illinois Central played an important role in the transportation of soldiers, horses, foodstuffs, military supplies and mails to Cairo for distribution by rail and river to military





A Modern Giant of the Rails—Powerful locomotives of this type are used extensively for hauling perishable fruits and vegetables, packing-house products and other commodities which require fast movement.

and naval forces in the lower Mississippi Valley.

Shortly after the termination of the war, railway construction was resumed on a large scale. From 1865 to 1870 nearly one thousand miles of new railroad were opened in Illinois. During the next ten years, from 1870 to 1880, the state's railway mileage increased from 4,823 to 7,851 miles.

By 1870 Illinois had outstripped Ohio and had become the first state in the Union in railway mileage, a position which it held without interruption for forty years, until superseded by Texas in 1910. Texas, however, has more than four times the area of Illinois.

During that remarkable period of railway development, from 1850 to 1880, the population of Illinois increased from 851,000 to 3,078,000. At the close of that period nearly every county in the state was served by railroads and supporting a thrifty and industrious population. Numerous towns and cities which were not on the map in 1850 had become busy centers of trade and industry. Older communities had experienced a remarkable growth.

Bloomington had increased in population from 1,594 to 17,200; Belleville from 2,941 to 10,700; Aurora from 1,895 to 11,900; Alton from 3,585 to 9,000; Danville from 736 to 7,700; Freeport from 1,436 to 8,500; Galesburg from 323 to 11,400; Jacksonville from 2,745 to 10,900; Joliet from 2,659 to 11,700; Pekin from 1,678 to 6,000; Peoria from 5,095 to 29,300; Quincy from 6,902 to 27,300; Rock Island from 1,711 to 11,700; Springfield from 4,533 to 19,700; while Chicago's population had increased sixteen fold, from 29,000 to 503,000!

Among the important cities of Illinois which were small towns or did not exist in 1850 are: Centralia, Champaign, Decatur, Elgin, Kankakee, Kewanee, Chicago Heights, West Frankfort, Urbana, La Salle, Lincoln, Mattoon, Granite City, Harrisburg, Harvey, Rockford, Moline, Mt. Vernon, Ottawa, Sterling, Streator, Canton, Waukegan, Cairo and East St. Louis.

While we have paused at 1880 to take note of the state's progress, that year did not mark a halt in the growth of Illinois or its railway system. Railway expansion continued through the 1880s and 1890s until in 1900 more than 11,000 miles of railroad existed in the state. Since then some 500 miles have been added, bringing total mileage up to around 11,500, or one mile of railroad for every 5 miles of land area in the state.

CHAPTER X

Railway Progress

EVER since steam railway transportation was introduced in Illinois, the science of railroading has constantly improved. Progress has been marked in every department of railway operations. Consequently, railway service is now vastly superior to that of a generation or two ago.

It will be recalled, for instance, that the first railroads in Illinois were constructed of wooden rails upon which were fastened thin strips of iron to provide a running surface for the wheels. In the 1850s iron rails were introduced. These rails, imported from England, weighed about 50 or 56 pounds to the yard. In the 1870s steel rails came into extensive use. As the weight of locomotives and cars increased and the art of

rail-making was improved, the weight of the rails was increased.

Steel rails of vastly superior quality, weighing from 100 to 130 pounds to the yard, are now in common use in Illinois. Numerous other improvements, such as tie plates, improved rail fastenings, and ballasting have made the modern railway track smoother, stronger and safer than ever before.

A Modern Passenger Coach designed to provide the maximum of comfort and convenience to the traveling public.

Bridges, too, have been greatly improved. When the first lines of the Illinois Central were built most of the watercourses were spanned by wooden bridges and trestles. A few of the larger rivers were spanned by bridges constructed of stone foundations and wooden superstructures, which supported the light locomotives of that day but would not be strong enough to bear the tremendous weight of a modern locomotive. The modern railway bridge is built of reinforced concrete and steel and is designed to stand the stress and strain of the heaviest trains.

Probably no part of the railway plant has undergone a greater change than the steam locomotive. The first locomotive operated on the Illinois Central burned wood for fuel. Its headlight burned whale- or coal-oil. It was equipped with two driving wheels and two small pilot wheels on either side, and its most conspicuous feature was a balloon-shaped smokestack five or six feet high. When fully loaded with wood and water, it would take twelve of these "Puffing Billies" to weigh as much as one modern locomotive.

Passenger cars used on the Illinois railroads in the 1850s would be curiosities today. They were built almost entirely of wood, narrower and lighter than the average street car of today. Most of them had four sets of wheels, two at each end. Few cars were equipped with springs, and every bump of the rough, unballasted track was immediately transmitted to the passenger. Seats were hard, low-backed and uncomfortable.

There were no vestibules on the early passenger cars, and passengers could not walk from one car to another when the train was in motion. The old link-and-pin coupling caused a great deal of slack between cars, adding to the discomfort of the passengers. Sometimes these couplings failed and trains broke apart with disastrous consequences. Cars were lighted by dim whale- or coal-oil lamps or flickering tallow candles and were heated in winter by wood-burning stoves. Ventilation was poor, and there were no screens. Sleeping cars and dining cars were then unknown in Illinois.

Today what a contrast! The modern all-steel passenger trains are veritable "hotels on wheels," electric-lighted, fan-cooled or air-conditioned, steam-heated, well-ventilated throughout, equipped with comfortable sleeping cars, chair cars, club cars, reading rooms, and with dining cars that provide a service comparable to that of the finest hotels in the land.

Marked progress has also been made in freight equipment and freight train operations. The first freight cars on the Illinois Central were of 10-ton capacity. Modern freight cars are capable of carrying from 40 to 70 tons each. Automatic air brakes have replaced the old hand brakes; automatic couplings have replaced the old link-and-pin couplings; steel cars have replaced wooden cars on the more important trains. Where only two or three kinds of cars were once used, modern freight and express equipment includes coal cars, tank cars, flat cars, box cars, furniture cars, automobile cars, refrigerator cars, stock cars, poultry cars, heater cars, milk cars and so on. Today there are freight and express cars especially adapted to the transportation of every type of commodity.

As a result of numerous improvements in construction and the greater size and weight of present-day railway equipment, the cost of locomotives and cars now far exceeds the cost of equipment used on the early days of railroading in Illinois. For instance, the first locomotives purchased by the Illinois Central in the 1850s

cost about $9,000 each. The latest locomotives purchased by this railroad cost over twenty- six times as much, or $241,000 each. The first passenger cars operated on the Illinois Central cost around $2,200 each. Modern steel passenger coaches cost about seventy times as much, or $140,000. Pullman and parlor cars cost as much as $200,000 each. The little wooden freight cars of the 1850s cost $600 or $700 each. Modern steel freight cars cost from $6,000 to $6,500 each.

In the early days the fastest passenger train between Chicago and Cairo made the run in twenty-four hours—sometimes. The trip is now made in less than six hours. Then the little locomotives could run only thirty or thirty-five miles without stopping to take on wood. Now a hundred miles or more between coalings are not uncommon. Then locomotives were capable of drawing only twelve small cars of freight. Today loaded freight trains of seventy-five to ninety much larger cars are not uncommon. Nowadays freight trains are operated on regular schedules at speeds unheard of a generation ago. The Illinois Central, for instance, provides a daily 41-hour freight service between Chicago and New Orleans and a 24-hour service between Chicago and Council Bluffs, Ia.

The little locomotives of the fifties were sometimes stalled for many hours in the snowdrifts. On-time arrivals were few; derailments were frequent; fatal accidents were all too common. The modern giants of the rails plunge through snowdrifts at top speed. Trains are punctual. Derailments and other train accidents are exceedingly rare.

Many factors have combined to increase safety in railway operations. Improvements in tracks, locomotives and cars and the more careful selection and training of railway employes have helped to increase efficiency and reduce accidents. Progress in these directions has also been due to telegraph and telephone communication and to electric signals, interlockers and automatic train control devices, all of which were introduced subsequent to the beginning of railway operations in Illinois.

All railroads in the early days were single-track lines. Thousands of miles of railroad in Illinois are now equipped with two or more tracks, which increase the capacity of the roads, enable the speedier movement of trains and reduce the hazard of accidents.

The sleeping car wrought a revolutionary change in railway travel. In 1856 the Illinois Central introduced what was probably the first sleeping car service in the Mississippi Valley. Although these pioneer sleepers were small, narrow, crudely constructed and lacking in nearly all of the conveniences of the modern sleeping car, they marked a great forward step in passenger train comfort.

Three years after the first sleeping cars were operated on the Illinois Central, George M. Pullman's first sleeping car, a converted passenger coach, was placed in service, the first run being made on the Chicago & Alton Railroad between Bloomington and Chicago on September 1, 1859. This car was lighted by tallow candles and heated by two stoves, one at each end. There was no carpet on the floor. Carpet bags were sometimes used for pillows.

Today thousands of Pullman sleeping cars, embodying comforts and conveniences which were unknown even a quarter of a century ago, are in use on nearly every important railroad

A Modern Passenger Station—The Illinois Central station at Champaign-Urbana is designed to provide the maximum of comfort and convenience to the traveling public. Thousands of university students use this station each year.

in the United States—a service of which every Illinoisan may be justly proud, because Pullman has been an Illinois institution from its inception.

Illinois also participated in the development of the railway post-office car. The necessity of establishing fast and reliable mail communication with military forces in the lower Mississippi Valley during the Civil War gave George Armstrong, a government postal em-

ployc, the inspiration which resulted in the first car equipped to sort mail en route.

Armstrong was then stationed at Cairo, the southern terminus of the Illinois Central Railroad, where he had charge of receiving and dispatching army and navy mails. Here the idea of the modern railway mail service took root and was put into practice to the extent that "a letter mailed in Chicago for any one of the western and southwestern armies reached its destination as soon as a passenger on the fastest train could reach it."

In August, 1864, two railway mail cars, "imperfect in their conveniences and really laughable when compared with the handsomely furnished postal cars of today," were placed in experimental service on the Chicago & North Western Railroad between Chicago and Clinton, Ia. Before the close of the Civil War postal cars, equipped to sort and distribute mails en route according to the present general practice, were being operated between Cairo and Chicago, between Cairo and Freeport and over several other routes in Illinois. These experiments were so successful that the Armstrong idea spread rapidly, and within a few years mail cars similarly equipped, were in use on all the important railroads in the country.

Illinois was the birthplace of railway refrigeration, which represented another great forward step in transportation. Thanks to the refrigerator car, Illinois now supplies the tables of millions of distant homes with meats, fresh eggs, dairy products, peaches, apples and other perishable products, and Illinois draws upon the groves of Florida and California, the plantations of Latin America and the truck gardens of the South and West for fruits and vegetables in great variety and at all seasons. Without this "ice-box on wheels" the meat-packing industry of Illinois and the fruit and vegetable industries of America would never have developed to anywhere near their present proportions and the diet of the average American would be far simpler, less attractive and less nutritious than it is today.

The first railway shipment ever made under refrigeration moved from Chicago to the East over the Michigan Central Railroad and connecting lines in 1857. The shipment consisted of dressed beef and was made in an ordinary box car equipped with two platforms, one at each end, inside the car, on which were placed several blocks of ice.

The first shipment of fruit under refrigeration upon any railroad in the United States was made from Cobden, Ill., to Chicago over the Illinois Central Railroad in 1866. The shipment consisted of strawberries, packed in several large wooden chests, each fitted with a compartment for ice. The berries brought high prices, and from that time forward fruit shipments under refrigeration increased rapidly. In 1867 the Illinois Central began operating the "Thunderbolt Express," the first all-strawberry train ever operated in the country, between southern Illinois and Chicago.

From these small beginnings has developed an industry of gigantic proportions involving the movement of hundreds of thousands of carloads of perishable food products annually.

In these and in numerous other ways the railroads have been marching steadily forward, keeping pace with the nation's progress. In recent years their progress has not been so much in the extension of new lines as in increasing the capacity and efficiency of established lines through the construction of additional tracks, the enlargement of shop and yard facilities, the installation of heavier rails, the use of more powerful locomotives and cars and the speeding up of passenger, freight, express and mail service.

A Majestic Railway Bridge—At Metropolis, the site of old Fort Massac, landing place of the first Americans to establish their homes in Illinois, this great structure of concrete and steel spans the Ohio River, forming one of two routes of the Illinois Central between Chicago and New Orleans. The other and older route is through Cairo.

Epilogue

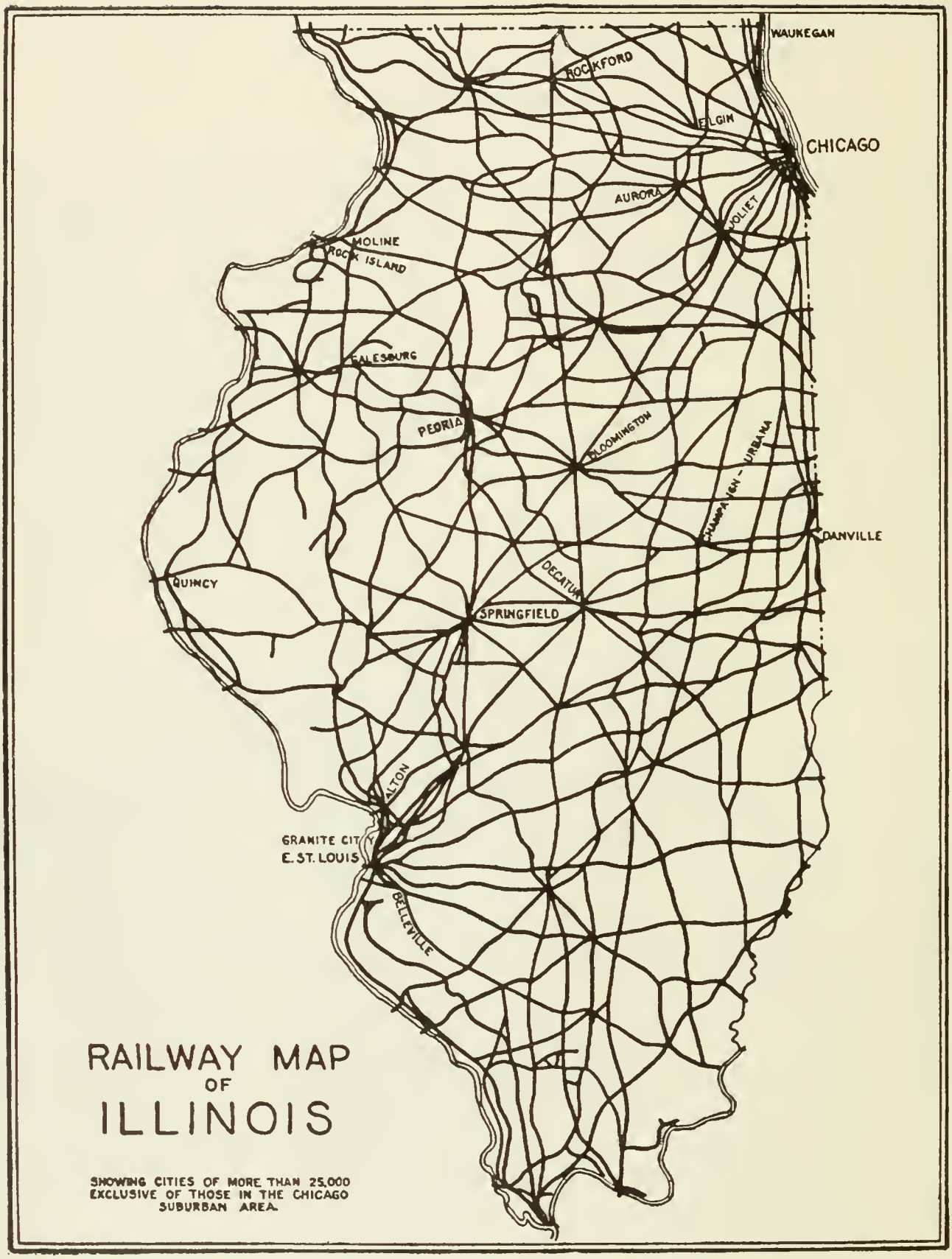
THE pioneer settler drove his slow-moving ox-team across the lonely prairies, sometimes for a hundred miles or more, to have a few bushels of wheat ground into flour or to exchange the products of his toil for salt, thread, calico and other necessities which he could not produce at home. Luxuries were rare. Food was plain. Reading matter was scarce. Life was primitive.

The difference between life then and now is due in no small measure to the improvements which have been wrought in transportation.

Railway transportation was the "key to the prairies." It enabled farms far removed from navigable streams to be opened and cultivated profitably. It created towns and cities and great industrial centers—markets for the farmer's products. It made possible the development of Illinois' rich mineral resources. It attracted the manufacturer, the artisan, the investor, the merchant, the preacher, the teacher. It enhanced the value of property and created new wealth for the benefit of all.

Moreover, railway transportation enabled Illinois, far removed from the seacoast, to extend its commerce to all parts of the world. Great manufacturing enterprises and great merchandising establishments, forming the backbone of Illinois' industrial and commercial structure, owe their tremendous growth to the fact that these transportation facilities have given them a world-wide market. Other industrial enterprises in Illinois employing large numbers of workers, have been developed to supply the needs of these great agencies of transportation.

THE STREAMLINER "GREEN DIAMOND"—When the first passenger train service was established between Chicago and St. Louis, in 1855, the trip between the two cities was made in 24 hours. A few years later the trip could be made in 12 hours. By 1900 the running time had been reduced to 8 hours. Today the Streamliner GREEN DIAMOND makes the Chicago-St. Louis run in 5 hours.


WAUKEGAN
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ROCK ISLAND
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CHAMPAIGN - URBANA
DANVILLE
QUINCY
DECATUR
SPRINGFIELD
ALTON
GRANITE CITY
E. ST. LOUIS
BELLEVILLE
RAILWAY MAP
OF
ILLINOIS
SHOWING CITIES OF MORE THAN 25,000
EXCLUSIVE OF THOSE IN THE CHICAGO
SUBURBAN AREA.

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